



Fifth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley, Hon.	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 3, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted certain resolutions, directs me to report the same, and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon ninety-five Grade 5 students from Edward Schreyer School under the direction of Ms. Lianne Shume. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Praznik).

Also, eleven Grades 6 to 9 students from Countryview School under the direction of Mr. Sid Barkman. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Breast Care Clinic Status Report

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, in the '98 budget the

government hastily closed the Misericordia Hospital and thereby closed the comprehensive breast program and services at the Misericordia Hospital. In May of '98, the chattering minister, the former minister, indicated that the program would be transferred, the whole comprehensive program would be transferred and women in Winnipeg and Manitoba could receive those services. He further announced on November 6, 1998, that we would be up and running in April of 1999 with the transfer of this program, the whole comprehensive program, to the St. Boniface Hospital.

I would like to know in June of 1999: was that commitment that was made a year ago and six months ago, is that open and running now in June of 1999, as promised six months ago?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Well, Madam Speaker, our government has announced and committed \$5.6 million in funding for the development, and the Leader of the Opposition indicates he knows that, which is encouraging, that he is aware that we have committed \$5.6 million for the development of a comprehensive breast health program. The program, I think, as most members know, will be located at 400 Tache Avenue, and it provides obviously for the development of this new site and the rapid access diagnosis centre. The information I have is that site will be open, I believe, as of September 1 of this year.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the date keeps changing and changing.

The staff and nurses at Misericordia Hospital have been informed that the program will be shut down at that site, the program for diagnostic testing, biopsies, counselling, both presurgical and post-surgical. This is following on a decision where surgery was closed down in December. These programs are going to be closed down on June 15.

I would like to know where Manitoba women will go on June 16 for those services.

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, where Manitoba women will go will be to the same doctors who are providing the services today. Those doctors will still be available. They will be available at their individual clinics, their individual facilities and at other hospitals as well. By September of this year, the comprehensive facility on Tache Avenue will be open.

I think it is important to acknowledge the significant strides and improvements we made in this whole area of testing for women, in the area of potential breast cancer. Not only does our mobile unit now screen some 33,000 women annually right across Manitoba, an increase of 11,000 screenings this year alone, partly through the additional money we put in, in this 1999 budget that the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues have voted for and supported, but, as well, there are an additional 30,000 screens done under the diagnostic mammography program. So, in total, on an annual basis, we are having some 63,000 Manitoba women screened for breast cancer, significant improvements over where we were several years ago because of the dedicated resources that we put into this very important area.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, for once, just once, can this government not keep a program going for Manitoba patients before their changed program starts up? You know, the personal care home beds are promised, they are cancelled; the hospital beds are closed down before the personal care beds are open, and then we have the Filmon hallway medicine because of it. Can we not for once have a program continue for Manitoba women before the other program starts?

Now I would like to ask a simple question. Why does the government not look at some of the new bureaucracy they have created and reallocating those funds for one of the vice-presidents they have hired in the regional health authority, look at moving some of the money from the bureaucracy to this program and keep the comprehensive program open at the Misericordia Hospital for diagnostic tests, for pre- and post-counselling for surgical patients? Let us put the patients first, and let us not close a program down before the new program is open.

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, by putting the patient first, that is why we introduced the Manitoba breast screening program in 1995, under this government, that today on the mobile basis and the combined basis is screening some 33,000 women in this province. As I say, from last year alone, an increase of 11,000 additional women to a total now of 33,000 annually; over and above that, 30,000 screens performed, as I have indicated, under diagnostic mammography, a total screening program of 63,000 women, programs put in place by this government that recognized that very important service that had to be provided. So again, it is through the commitment of our resources and the various requirements to put these programs in place to deal with this very important health matter.

* (1335)

Breast Care Clinic Status Report

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, the Misericordia breast program closes on June 15. Nurses have had their notices, meaning that doctors will have to book summer surgeries through their own offices. There will not be an education program. Referrals to surgeons will be delayed, and I could go on discussing the problems in service. Frankly, the whole thing is a mess. I would like to ask this Minister of Health, and I am not asking him about breast screening, I would like to ask him exactly and specifically: what does this closure mean for a woman who discovers a lump on June 15, exactly and specifically?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, here we go again with members opposite. I got called on a point of order once before when I suggested what they are trying to do with their approach when they come to this House in terms of their motives. They have the same services available to them. These doctors are still in these provinces, they are still in their clinics, they are still in hospitals and the services are available to get the various treatments.

Again the member did not pay attention to my answer to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr.

Doer) when I clearly outlined the two elements. There is the screening mammography. Under that program, there are 33,000 women screened. There is the diagnostic mammography. Under that program, 30,000 women screened for a total of 63,000 women right across our province through a number of the services that are available not only at Misericordia but at the other hospital facilities and through the doctors' clinics.

So those doctors are still in place, those services are still available to women, and on I believe by September of this year, the one new facility at 400 Tache will be open.

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Health if he would tell this House: why, since he and his colleagues have had well over a year to prepare for the move from the Misericordia to the so-called new facility, has he not opened one facility before closing another? It seems like he could not plan his way out of a paper bag.

Mr. Stefanson: Again, I think what members opposite should acknowledge is that we have put in place these programs, we have dedicated the resources, we have started programs like the Manitoba Breast Screening Program. We now have a situation where 63,000 Manitoba women annually have access to these very important services—not members opposite, not the NDP. In fact, until this year, those same members have voted against the very budget that has put in place the services that today are providing these services. Now, finally this year, they got the wisdom to support one of our budgets that is providing the resources to provide these screenings and these services to Manitoba women right across the province.

We certainly appreciate their support for our 1999 budget.

Ms. McGifford: I would like to ask the minister, on behalf of the Lakeshore Women's Resource Centre, who believe it is time that the needs of women were recognized, exactly and specifically when the new treatment centre will be open, because we have heard September, November, October, December. When exactly will it be open?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Mr. Stefanson: I will certainly look into the date for the member and report back to her as soon as possible.

Police Services Independent Investigations Unit

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): To the Minister of Justice. Over the last week in particular, Manitobans have, I think it is fair to call it, renewed concerns about how police officers are dealt with when serious criminal acts are alleged against them, because there is a perceived conflict of interest when the officer's own police department and the Prosecutions department that works daily with police gathers and prepares the evidence.

My question to the minister is: to enhance the reputation of the police and to help enhance public confidence, would the minister change his position and now support our commitment to establish with Manitoba police forces special independent investigation teams and independent counsel for particular incidents of alleged police crimes?

* (1340)

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): That indeed is an issue that this department has looked at on a periodic basis. The only province in Canada that has had an SIU, special investigations unit, is the province of Ontario, and there have been substantive problems with that particular mechanism. We work very closely together with the police, both the union and the management, to ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms, to ensure that everyone is held accountable under the law, and we will certainly continue to examine that to revise our policies and indeed, if necessary, to pass laws.

Mr. Mackintosh: By his answer, why is the minister therefore welcoming the perception of conflict of interest and rejecting the thrust of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry into the killing of J.J. Harper and its conclusion that it is vitally

important for the good of our communities that the public have confidence in its police forces—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member I believe had put his question.

Point of Order

Mr. Mackintosh: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I note a little pattern I would think here of your cutting me off in questions. It is interesting that you cut me off in a question two days ago, saying that I had a preamble. In fact, the only words were something to the effect: has the minister—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Mackintosh: I ask, Madam Speaker, that you review Hansard, and after that you can report back to the House on what your findings are.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I indeed will take the point of order raised by the honourable member for St. Johns under advisement, but I would remind the honourable member that the members should, when raising a point of order, state the rule that has been violated.

* * *

Mr. Toews: Of course, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry is an inquiry that made a broad number of recommendations. Some of those recommendations have in fact been accepted by this government, and in fact programs have been implemented. There are, however, other programs where we do not agree. For example, I know the member wants all of our prisons converted into minimum-security, open-door institutions similar to Dauphin. Well, frankly, Madam Speaker, I do not agree with that recommendation of the justice inquiry, and I do not agree with the member for St. Johns in that respect.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would this minister, who just fabricated some nonsense, Madam Speaker, deal

with the issues that Manitobans are dealing with?

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, the member for St. Johns has continuously asked me to implement the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. One of those recommendations is that Headingley Correctional Institution and Stony Mountain Institution, the federal institution, are the only secure facilities for male offenders in Manitoba. In fact, the recommendation then continues to go on—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Justice was recognized for a point of order, and I do not hear a point of order being cited. I hear only debate relative to the dispute over the comments made by the honourable member for St. Johns. Does the honourable Minister of Justice have a point of order?

* (1345)

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, my point of order is that, in fact, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry recommended that there be open-door prisons.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Justice does not have a point of order.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Would the honourable member for St. Johns please pose his question now.

Mr. Mackintosh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Would the minister, instead of being so insensitive to public perceptions, not learn something from tragic events like the killing of J.J. Harper and from recent public perceptions that he should be aware of? Why does he doom us to repeat history and risk diminishing the reputation of the police with his flawed process?

Mr. Toews: Well, Madam Speaker, for one reason, we believe that we have been working very well with police forces. We have been working very well with the management of police forces, and we have been working very well with community organizations. We have taken the position that there should not be an apartheid system of justice in Manitoba, contrary to what the member across the way believes.

Education System Funding—Property Taxes

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Over the years, this government has taken great glee from the fact that they have kept personal income tax down. There has been a great cost if we take a look at the continual reliance of funding public education through our property tax. My question put quite simply to the Minister of Finance is: what is the government specifically doing to recognize the inequities that it is causing as a direct result of the continual reliance of financing more and more of our public education on our property tax?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the member for Inkster, of course, is the only one in this House that voted against the budget this year, a budget that saw tax reductions to all Manitobans. We reduced the income tax of Manitobans by three points from 50 percent to 40 percent of federal tax. We also had other tax reductions within the budget which are within our control, and we will continue to do that. We have put the Lower Tax Commission into place, who are going to review the taxation system within the province of Manitoba and bring recommendations back to us by the end of the year.

Property Taxes Reduction

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, is the Minister of Finance prepared to give assurances to Manitobans as a whole that this government does have an agenda that sees a reduction of property tax?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Finance): I just indicated to the member for Inkster and to the House that we have put in place the Lower Tax Commission which has already started its work. It is looking at all forms of taxation in the province of Manitoba, including property tax.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, what we are asking the Minister of Finance to do is as he is doing with personal income tax. He is not relying on the tax fairness commission to come back with respect to that tax. We are asking the government to do likewise with regard to the property tax. Will the government not acknowledge the inequities that are there and do something to address them, make a commitment to Manitobans that this government is or is not committed to reducing property tax?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We are extremely proud on this side of the House of being able to cut taxes for Manitobans. We feel the taxes are too high. The only member in this House who voted against those tax cuts is the member for Inkster. We have put in place the Lower Tax Commission to review all forms of taxation, and we are not going to prejudge their work. They have just started work. We will be receiving their report later this year. Our commitment as a government is to continue to lower taxes for Manitobans.

Norman Regional Health Authority Minister's Review

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): My questions are for the Minister of Health. As the minister knows, two CEOs of the Norman Regional Health Authority have quit in less than two years, just weeks after the current CEO went public with concerns over shortages of staff, refusal of the province to fund overtime and a continuing deficit. Given the status of existing services in the North, could I ask the minister to agree to review the situation at the RHA with a view to stabilize the RHA so as to ensure quality and continuity of service?

- (1350)

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Again, Madam Speaker, I think most who have

looked at the issue of regionalization would agree that it is the right approach, the right thing to do across Manitoba, that by having regional health authorities we are able to make the best use of our physical assets, our buildings in all of our communities, the best use of the equipment in terms of meeting the health care needs and the best use of our people. So, on an overall basis, certainly the feedback I have had is that regionalization is the right thing to do, and it is working very well right across Manitoba.

In terms of the Norman region, the specific questions from the member for The Pas, I am certainly prepared to look into any situations, any issues affecting health care in the Norman region.

Health Care Facilities

Capital Projects—Community Contribution

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): My second question is to the same minister. Why are taxpayers in the town of The Pas required to pay more than a 20 percent contribution that this government imposed, in light of the fact that the town was already required to spend \$400,000 on road changes, not to mention the additional \$60,000 that they are going to have to pay to the church for the property that this government refused to pay?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I have had an opportunity to meet with representatives from The Pas, from the surrounding municipality, from various organizations on this very important project, the new personal care home facility in The Pas, and all parties have agreed to that project in terms of seeing it go forward. We have committed our money as a provincial government.

The communities have certainly come up with their community contribution, and that project is ready to go. I expect it will be going out for tender very, very shortly, and what it will do is it will significantly enhance the personal care home facility in The Pas for the benefit of the people in that community and in the entire surrounding area. So we are very proud of that project, very proud to see it proceeding, and it will be into tender very shortly.

Mr. Lathlin: My last question, Madam Speaker, is to the same minister. Will the minister reconsider his decision to force the RHA to pay the \$100,000 to the church for the property so that the RHA can hire extra nurses that are so badly needed there?

Mr. Stefanson: Again, Madam Speaker, I just reiterate for the member for The Pas, I have met with the various organizations, including the RHA, and everybody acknowledges this is a very important project to move forward. It is going to enhance the personal care home beds in The Pas, and all parties have come to agreement in terms of the funding of that going forward. The government of Manitoba will be providing 90 percent of the funding; the remainder is coming from a number of sources within the community. The town of The Pas itself is putting in place some improvements in terms of some of the road configurations and so on. So this is a very positive project, a very positive initiative in terms of meeting the health care needs of the people of The Pas and surrounding region.

Rural Stress Line Implementation

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, rural families in southwestern Manitoba are facing serious challenges with the unprecedented rain and the additional rain they had last night. Unfortunately there are not very many supports in place to help these families who are facing tremendous stress. What we need are long-term solutions to provide services to rural Manitobans rather than ad hoc programs. Of course, a real solution would be the rural stress line.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health when he is going to finally recognize that we need a rural stress line in rural Manitoba, rather than ad hoc programs, and when is it going to be put in place.

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): I thank the honourable member for that question. As she well knows, we have gone through a number of events in the last couple or three years in this province which has created a lot of stress and has been an emotional upheaval

for many people. Our response to that type of situation through the Manitoba Emergency Management Organization is to apply our resources to that in terms of responding to the western side of the province. We have in place through the office at Melita the necessary resources that are there in terms of being able to deal with families who are having financial stress or emotional stress or any crisis that they may be encountering. That service is out there now, and it is in place.

Ms. Wowchuk: I would like to ask this government: why is it that they have to put in place ad hoc programs and temporary services for people throughout rural Manitoba only when a disaster comes about? Why can we not have a long-term program? Why can we not have a rural stress line in place?

Mr. Pitura: Madam Speaker, with regard to a disaster, of course, we are there, and we are there to assist in any way we can with any kind of emotional or financial stress. I believe that, although the member is talking about a constant line that is available, through our regional health districts there are lines set up that are called crisis lines at the present time that are available for use within the mental health area. So, as a result of just through Disaster Financial Assistance and through MEMO, in terms of co-ordinating all these agencies together, we are able to provide that service to that area right now, which is tending to need that service more so than they ever have in the past.

* (1355)

Ms. Wowchuk: I would like to ask the minister then why it is that in Saskatchewan they have a farm and rural stress line in place, they have sent out bulletins to all the farmers in the area offering the services, and here in Manitoba all we can have is ad hoc services and lack of services in southwest Manitoba and in other parts of the province where there is a tremendous amount of stress on all farmers who are facing very low commodity prices now.

Mr. Pitura: During the flood of 1997, we had essentially the same service in place that we have at the present time. In fact, we are still dealing with it, in terms of delivering that

service to people who are still finishing off the recovery process from the 1997 flood. That service will be there until it is no longer required.

Our intention is the same in the western part of the province, to have that service in place. It will be in place as long as it is required, and we are committed to doing that.

Hazardous Waste Plutonium Transportation

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Premier.

According to the most recent State of the Environment report, transport-related environmental accidents involving hazardous waste increased by over 70 percent in a five-year period. This has raised concerns from Manitoba communities located on major trucking routes in this province. Concerns have been heightened by proposals to truck weapon-grade plutonium in the form of MOX fuel through Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, given that the Premier has been made aware of these concerns from the town of Morris, which is located on one of the proposed trucking routes, can he indicate whether he will actually oppose the shipment of plutonium through Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I will take that question as notice and have some discussions with the people in the Department of Environment about the issue.

Mr. Dewar: I will have to ask the Minister of Environment, Madam Speaker. Can the minister indicate, when the town of Morris has written three letters to the federal government opposing the shipment of plutonium, why one of her officials is quoted as saying Manitoba would have no problem with plutonium being shipped along its highways?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. This issue has been a current issue for some weeks now, and I am pleased that he has decided to ask a question on it.

I indicate that there are—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. McIntosh: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. There are very strict, very rigid guidelines and rules about how hazardous waste is transported right across the nation. Manitoba has hazardous waste being shipped from time to time from hospitals, from other areas. There are very firm and strict rules about how hazardous waste material has been transported in Canada. Those guidelines are adhered to.

The plutonium he is discussing, of course, will probably not come through the border into Manitoba. It is very unlikely that that is the route it would take. But if it does come that way, then all of the national standards for transportation will be met.

* (1400)

Mr. Dewar: Madam Speaker, my question to the minister is: does she support the transport of plutonium through Manitoba, yes or no?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, the member is probably not aware that plutonium and other materials such as that, radioactive materials from hospitals, et cetera, are being transported across this nation on highways under very strict rules and guidelines. In fact, we are making the point in Pinawa that the radioactive waste that is there must be taken to Chalk River, and we are making the case very strongly that the federal government cannot just store radioactive material here that is not being worked upon by eminent scientists, and it must be transported to Chalk River.

The member knows that there is work being done in Chalk River which will enable, hopefully, the global community to rid itself of some of this material, a goal I would think that he would support. I am sorry that he does not support that, because, as we attempt to reduce the radioactive material around the world or reduce nuclear waste, the member I think would participate willingly in having research done to

accomplish that goal, which is being done at Chalk River.

Mutual Life Insurance Department Studies

Hon. Shirley Render (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I took a question as notice yesterday, and I would like to respond.

However, first of all, on reading a Hansard, I noticed that I inadvertently omitted the word "life" from my answer. So I would like to correct the record to read: Manitoba has no provincially incorporated mutual life companies.

Now, in answer to the honourable member's question, are there any studies—there have been none done by this department, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, and when checking with the Securities Commission, they have no knowledge of any studies on this particular aspect.

Health Care Facilities Food Services

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, last week I had the opportunity to speak with a couple of senior citizens on Inglis Street, and the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Barrett: Madam Speaker, the senior citizen with whom I spoke had spent a week in Grace Hospital for a hip replacement, and he stated to me that the food was so bad he literally existed for a week on tea and water. I would like to ask the Minister of Health how he can say in the House earlier this week that the frozen food system is running smoothly when seniors like this and other people who are in hospitals and long-term personal care home beds have to eat sandwiches that are still frozen, potatoes that are hot outside and frozen inside.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, a continued focus of the Urban Shared Services Corporation and facilities like our Grace Hospital is to continue to focus on quality, nutritional food. They have a patient

advisory committee that reviews many of these issues, and they continue to do patient surveys. The patient surveys do show that more and more patients are satisfied with the food, comparing it to what the food was like prior to the changes. There are higher approval ratings today compared to what the food was like prior to the changes. But it is incumbent on that organization and the hospital to continue to focus on being sure that the food is of an appropriate quality, and in particular, appropriate nutrition to meet the needs of patients in our health care facilities.

Ms. Barrett: Madam Speaker, how can the Minister of Health justify spending and continuing to spend half a million dollars on advertising touting the positives of his health care system while seniors and others in hospitals and long-term personal care home beds are forced to choose between eating inedible food and going hungry?

Mr. Stefanson: Well, again, the hospitals themselves, the Urban Shared Services Corporation is managed by the nine hospitals themselves, and they certainly have as much interest as anybody in being absolutely certain that the food is of appropriate quality, nutrition, and so on for the patients in their facilities. They are running those same facilities that the food is being provided to, so those nine CEOs are very concerned about being sure that the food is of appropriate quality and nutritional value.

That is why they do patient surveys to continue to assess what the response is from the patients, and on an overall basis, patients continue to show more and more approval, higher approvals than the old system, and they should and they will continue to do that, to focus on providing quality, nutritional food to the patients in our health care facilities.

Ms. Barrett: Will the minister finally acknowledge that the sickest people in this province, the people who are in hospitals and long-term personal care homes, continue to have to pay for his government's arrogant refusal to acknowledge the fact that it is their responsibility for this frozen food fiasco, and the sickest people in this province are continuing to have to pay by eating this food?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, our hospital system today in Manitoba serves on an annual basis some 243,000 patients every year, and that number has continued to go up each and every year because we are doing more procedures. We are doing more hip operations, more knee operations, more heart operations, and the list goes on and on, continuing to provide more services. That is why this budget has \$194 million more in it. That is why we are spending \$2.1 billion, but I am sure when you are servicing 243,000 patients and individuals, if the member for Wellington wants to go out and find one or two that might have something to complain about, I am sure she could do that.

But I encourage her to start to look at the overall surveys, the focus that is done by the hospitals themselves, the surveys of patients of the hospitals that show continual higher approval ratings of this food each and every month, higher approval rating than the previous system, and those CEOs of those hospitals are committed to providing nutritional, quality food to the patients in Winnipeg hospitals.

Little Grand Rapids Airport Relocation

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): It has been a year and a half now since the tragic crash at Little Grand Rapids, and residents there have been wondering what the province is prepared to do regarding the airstrip, aside from the recent removal of the downed aircraft. I would like to ask the Minister of Highways and Transportation to tell the House: what has happened to the December 1997 promise of the previous minister that the airstrip would be moved to the mainland?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Highways and Transportation): I did not catch the first part of the member's question. I believe he was talking about Little Grand Rapids as the community and place. That is a file of picking up as a new minister and looking at that particular file. The results of the investigation are obviously very important to determining the cause of the danger of that particular airport. I have not yet completed my analysis of that within the department. When I do, I will be very

pleased to discuss that with the member, whether it be in the House or in Estimates.

Mr. Robinson: The tragedy I am talking about of course took four lives. The previous minister was quoted as saying: the only realistic option left would be to construct a new airport at a different location. With that in mind, I would like to table a letter from the previous minister. He wrote to me in 1994 in which—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Would the honourable member please pose his question.

Mr. Robinson: The question I would like to ask the minister is: where is the plan to deal with this issue about the airstrip at Little Grand Rapids?

Mr. Praznik: The fundamental part, the question, is whether or not the issue is the airport itself or, in the case of that particular tragedy, decisions made by the pilot. That is part of the work that I am doing. The issue has been brought to my attention. There are problems with that airport. It is not necessarily the best in the province, but part of the work that I am doing with my department now is to do a good analysis as to what has to be done. Some of that work has been completed, and I would be more than pleased to have a more detailed discussion with the member about this in the Estimates debate.

*(1410)

Little Grand Rapids Plane Crash Community Recognition

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): I have one final question with respect to this crash that occurred in 1997. As all members in the House know, the community came out in full force, including Councillor Enil Keeper, Councillor Nelson Keeper and others, and virtually no recognition was given to these residents of this community.

I would like to ask the minister if he could correct this wrong. In the meantime, others were recognized for their efforts, but it was the community that motivated and activated the community in saving lives.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Highways and Transportation): I am not quite sure what the member is asking of me in terms of recognition of the role of individuals or the community where that recognition was afforded or was not afforded. I think, on behalf of the province, whenever an emergency strikes and the community instigates emergency procedures and is very highly successful in doing that, as was the case here in saving lives, we certainly applaud their efforts. I am not quite sure where these individuals were not recognized or where others were recognized, but that is a discussion I certainly look forward to having with him in the Estimates process.

Home Care Program Waiver of Rights

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): To the honourable Minister of Family Services. Since April 1, 1999, Madam Speaker, the Department of Family Services assumed responsibility for administering the Home Care services program. The seniors who want to access the program are being required, as a precondition to accessing the service, to sign a waiver or general release and indemnity form absolving the government of responsibility for any damage, injury or any loss arising out of the performance of home care services, a document which I hereby table.

The question is: why does this Tory government, through the Department of Family Services, abdicate government responsibility for providing safe and good-quality home care services and discouraging seniors by asking them to sign waivers of their rights?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question. Yes, this is an issue that has been raised with me. As the member has indicated, we did take over the City of Winnipeg's caseload and the program that the City of Winnipeg was running. It was a community home services project.

That project has been ongoing and running, delivered by the City of Winnipeg for many, many years, and the form that the Province of Manitoba is having individuals sign is exactly the same form that the City of Winnipeg had.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

St. Cyprians Anglican Church

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): I am pleased to rise today to congratulate the congregation of St. Cyprians Anglican Church in Teulon as they mark the 100th anniversary of the church. St. Cyprians Church was built in 1899 in the Foxton district of Manitoba, which was two miles east of Teulon, and the first service was held there in February 1900. In 1909, St. Cyprians moved to its current home on Second Street East in Teulon, and it has been an important part of the community ever since.

As part of the centennial celebrations a photo display is being prepared by the oldest member of the congregation, who is Kay Campbell, which can be viewed in the church hall beginning June 12. The 100th anniversary celebration will be held the weekend of June 26 and 27 and includes a banquet on the Saturday at the Gunton Community Hall and a special church service at the church on Sunday. Once again, my congratulations to St. Cyprians on reaching this very special milestone. Thank you.

Norman Regional Health Authority

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, the CEO of the Norman Regional Health Authority is resigning, citing personal reasons. This is the second CEO of the Norman Regional Health Authority to resign in less than two years. This follows a difficult month for the Flin Flon Hospital.

On May 4, the CEO told the Flin Flon Chamber of Commerce that there was a nursing shortage forcing nurses to work overtime, causing burnout. She said that the RHA has no funding from the province for overtime and the Flin Flon Hospital has been unable to find staffing for physiotherapy and speech language therapy, along with a lack of resources considered essential, such as home care. It is expected that the need for services will exceed the available resources. The hospital is still running a deficit.

On May 14, a special care unit of the Flin Flon Hospital was shut down for several days due to nursing shortages and is still shut down as of today, June 3. During this period, critically ill patients were stabilized in the emergency department and then transferred to The Pas as soon as possible. Small wonder that the residents of Flin Flon and other northern communities say that the province should cancel any plans by the Health minister to spend more tax dollars on self-serving advertising promoting the government.

Northerners want the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba to pay back the more than \$500,000 for the previous advertising campaign which was clearly put together for partisan purposes, not to inform the public.

Flin Flon Hospital, like other hospitals in the North, needs front-line health care workers, not misleading promotional government advertising paid for by the taxpayers. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Before I recognize the honourable member, could I please ask for the co-operation of all honourable members in having quieter conversations. I experienced considerable difficulty in hearing the last two speakers.

Manitoba Business Magazine Awards

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to take a moment to recognize the recipients of the recent Manitoba Business Magazine Business and Entrepreneur Awards. Russ Edwards was named the 1999 Entrepreneur of the Year. The Best in Business Award winners included the King Optical Group; Triple E, the Winkler trailer manufacturer; the Birchwood auto group; OnLine Business Systems; and Kitchen Craft Cabinetry.

I am pleased organizations such as Manitoba Business take time to sponsor this annual event which provides an opportunity to celebrate the success of outstanding Manitoba businesses and their management teams. All the award winners are models of determination and ingenuity that the entire business community respects and looks up to. They are bringing new products and

services to the market, often in the face of great odds. These businesses have proven that to be successful businesses they must be proactive, aggressive and competitive in order to thrive in today's competitive global economy.

As entrepreneurs in Manitoba, their success is our success, and a major contribution to the province's economy. Businesses such as these have been the most consistent and the most significant creators of jobs in the province throughout the 1990s. The success of companies such as these shows that Manitoba's strong combination of a dynamic export-oriented business community and a climate of fiscal responsibility is paying off. Our export growth is leading the nation. We are creating more jobs than the national average and maintaining one of the lowest unemployment rates in Canada.

I would like to congratulate all the entrepreneurs who are making Manitoba's economy so strong and wish them continued success. Thank you.

* (1420)

Eaton's Store—Brandon

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, I rise to comment on the very sad news heard this morning about the closure of the Eaton's store in downtown Brandon, a store that has served the community well over the years, but unfortunately, because of the lack of business in the downtown area particularly, Eaton's has decided to close the store in Brandon, along with some others, I must say, across the country.

It has had a very long history of service. I recall 35 years ago going to that store, and it was just a hubbub of activity, and this is where you would go for your appliances or your furniture and even good-quality meat. In the basement, they had a great groceteria which we patronized all the time to purchase groceries.

But those days are long since past, and I guess it is falling victim to the competition from the so-called big-box stores—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. L. Evans: Thank you, Madam Speaker. There has definitely been a shift away to other stores specializing in furniture and appliances. But also, very seriously, there has been a shift away from downtown Brandon to the south side of the city near the Shoppers Mall, and as a result there has been serious deterioration in the downtown portion of Brandon. It is something that I believe is a challenge not only to the City Council and the local Chamber of Commerce and the community of Brandon but also to this government to take a hard look at what is happening in downtown Brandon and to look at programs that could preserve and enhance the downtown area.

I recall, when we were in government some years back, we, as a deliberate policy back in the Schreyer years, put the provincial building in the downtown area. There were pressures to put it out where the old jail was in the east end, Rideau Park lodge now, Rideau Park nursing home, but we made a decision to put it in the downtown area to help and preserve and enhance. Similarly, with senior citizens housing we put several—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

Winnipeg Police Service

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): I wanted to say a few words about an issue where the public has decided to try someone in the media, and that is a police officer who has been tried in the media, a police officer whose peers, 12 of his peers, found him not guilty.

Now it would be easy for any person from this place to maybe go back to a reception some place and have a glass of wine and then leave this building, get stopped and not know if they might be over .08 and decide not to take a breathalyser. Does that mean they are impaired? Not necessarily. In the same circumstance, if someone had a glass of wine and drove down the street, and through no fault of their own, someone ran in front of them, and they killed them. They may not be impaired. They may be scared, in the heat of the moment make a

mistake. The Winnipeg Police Service hires good people, the best people, but good people make mistakes. We ask our police officers to be compassionate, be understanding. Well, we are asking for the same thing in return.

No one should be tried in the media, and one individual, a good person who was investigated, was hired, came to the Police Service with a good record, with good intentions, wanting to do good, has made a mistake and due process should be followed. Neither politicians nor the media should try this person in a public venue. That is all I have to say, Madam Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): I believe there are some committee changes that the member for Gimli would like to move first, as well as the member for Point Douglas. So I defer to them.

Committee Changes

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): I move, seconded by the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs be amended as follows: the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou) for the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey); the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) for the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau).

Motion agreed to.

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs be amended as follows: the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) for the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), for Monday, June 7, 1999, for 10 a.m.

Motion agreed to.

House Business

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I believe this morning we waived Private Members' hour, so I will be moving that we go into Estimates. Before I do that, I understand that both the

Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) and the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), the Health critic, would like to be able to adjourn that committee at 5:45 to accommodate public functions that they have to be at tonight.

So before I move the motion, I would ask if we would give leave to allow the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in the Chamber to adjourn at 5:45 to accommodate both the minister and the critic.

Madam Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to permit the section of Supply for Health to adjourn prior to the regular adjournment time? [agreed]

Mr. Praznik: I would now move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and that this House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Most Gracious Majesty.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr. Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training. When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 16.6. Support for Post-Secondary Education (d) Post-Secondary Strategic Initiatives Fund, on page 55 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Chairman, on page 89 of the 1999-2000 Department of Education and Training Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, the amount of \$2,275,000 for Professional Services, under Other Expenditures, is comprised of \$7,600 for professional fees included within the 16.4. (a) Schools Finance (2) Other Expenditures, and

\$2,267,400 included in 16.4. (a) Schools Finance (3) Property Assessment on page 50 of the 1999 Manitoba Estimates of Expenditures.

With regard to this matter, I am tabling a document which I think clears up the matter.

Mr. Chairperson: 16.6. Support for Post-Secondary Education (d) Post-Secondary Strategic Initiatives Fund \$1,300,000—pass.

16.6.(e) Access Programs \$6,484,700—pass.

16.6.(f) Student Financial Assistance (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,482,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$665,200—pass; (3) Loans and Bursaries \$8,692,200—pass; (4) Interest Relief \$1,433,500—pass; (5) Debt Reduction \$763,500—pass; (6) Scholarship and Bursaries Initiative \$5,000,000—pass; (7) Manitoba Learning Tax Credit \$15,000,000—pass.

Resolution 16.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$325,953,300 for Education and Training, Support for Post-Secondary Education, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

The next item is 16.7. Capital Grants (a) School Divisions \$27,437,300—pass; (b) Universities \$10,940,000—pass; (c) Community Colleges \$2,245,600—pass; (d) Less: Recoverable from Capital Initiatives (1) School Divisions (\$2,500,000) and (2) Universities (\$2,000,000).

Resolution 16.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$36,122,900 for Education and Training, Capital Grants, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

16.8. Amortization of Capital Assets \$1,787,300—pass.

Resolution 16.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,787,300 for Education and Training, Amortization of Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

The last item to be considered in the Estimates of Education and Training is 1.(a) Minister's Salary \$27,000.

* (1440)

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Chairman, I think it is an appropriate time to thank the minister and his staff for their long hours, the staff in particular, and to also thank the minister for the comparatively civil way in which these Estimates have been conducted. I appreciated the civil manner in which it was dealt with. Thank you.

Mr. McCrae: Rather than risk any retraction of what the honourable member has said, I think I will just say thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable minister, and we thank all members of the committee.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training is the Minister's Salary at \$27,000—pass.

Resolution 16.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,635,300 for Education and Training for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training. We will now proceed to the next departmental Estimates.

What is the will of the committee? Are we going to recess for a few minutes? [agreed]

The committee recessed at 2:42 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 2:47 p.m.

LABOUR

Mr. Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): The Estimates that we will be considering in this

section of the Committee of Supply are the Estimates of the Department of Labour.

Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Labour. Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister of Labour): Yes, I do, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, to proceed.

Mr. Radcliffe: It is my privilege to present the Expenditure Estimates of the Department of Labour for the fiscal year 1999-2000. Working together with the labour-management community and other stakeholders, I believe that the department had another successful year in 1998-99, and I anticipate the same for the current year.

I want to begin by commending the staff of the Department of Labour. They are a dedicated, hardworking group of professional people that provide valuable services to the citizens of Manitoba under the very capable leadership of the deputy minister, Mr. Tom Farrell. I wish to thank them for their efforts and their commitment in all their services which they perform in this department.

I would specifically like to acknowledge the accomplishments of my two senior staff. My Deputy Minister Tom Farrell is currently president of the Manitoba Safety Council, which celebrated its 35th year with the opening of a new training centre here in the city of Winnipeg. Mr. Farrell is also a member of the National Council of Governors for the Occupational and Health Safety and also Dr. Madhav Sinha of the Workplace Safety and Health Division has been awarded the prestigious 1998 Edwards Medal from the American Society for Quality. This is the first time that the medal has been awarded to a Canadian citizen.

The 1999-2000 total budget request for the Department of Labour is \$14,057,800. This represents an increase of 7 percent from the previous year. This increase largely reflects

salary increases for staff of the department under the negotiated collective agreements. Our Estimates include an amount of \$320,400 for the amortization of capital assets that represent the department's share of the total estimated project costs of the government-wide desktop management and Better Methods initiatives.

The Department of Labour has now been successfully transitioned to the new desktop environment, and all employees of the department are now using standardized computer workstations and related software that provide them with an effective and flexible infrastructure to support departmental and corporate-wide systems initiatives. The Department of Labour is one of the first departments in the government of Manitoba to be fully transitioned to the new system. The Department of Labour recovers a significant portion of its annual expenditures through its various sources of revenue, and in 1999-2000, a revenue recovery of about 61 percent of the departmental budget is projected.

During the past year, the department enacted a number of important legislative and regulatory changes. I am pleased to inform you that the new consolidated employment standards code and its accompanying regulations came into force on May 1, 1999. As a consequence of this consolidation, workplaces in Manitoba now have available improved legislation that more clearly and consistently defines the rights and responsibilities of both employers and employees. For these reasons I am extremely pleased that this legislative development has now been successfully achieved by this administration.

* (1450)

In addition, Mr. Chairperson, new legislation was introduced respecting professional engineers and technologists. The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Act expands the application of the legislation to include geoscientists and updates many administrative matters under the act. The Certified Applied Science Technologists Act was also enacted this year. This act is complementary to the professional engineers, geoscientists legislation and recognizes the concept of the engineering team in Manitoba.

In addition to statutes, a number of regulations have been enacted this past year by the Department of Labour, including the following. Firstly, the pension benefits regulation was amended to change the method used to review funding of defined benefit plans. The change is intended to ensure that Manitoba plans are sufficiently funded to provide required benefits to members and former members. A further significant change to the regulation, which resulted from many requests from Manitoba citizens, provides pensioners and former members of plans with greater flexibility in dealing with pension assets by introducing the locked-in retirement fund or LRIF.

The Pension Commission of Manitoba, comprised of members representing the pension-consulting industry, organized labour, financial institutions and other stakeholders, supported these changes. Revisions to the first aid regulation under The Workplace Safety and Health Act were made to provide for the updating of first aid supplies and for the training of first aiders in Manitoba workplace.

The Workplace Safety regulation with respect to the operation of forklifts was amended to provide for increased safety through the training and certification of forklift operators. The Manitoba building and plumbing codes were re-enacted. As in the past, the revised national codes published by the National Research Council of Canada have been adopted with amendments to suit the Manitoba conditions.

The Manitoba fire code was also updated by adopting the 1995 national fire code with Manitoba amendments. The significant Manitoba amendment provides for specific fire safety requirements for residential care facilities in the province.

I am pleased to inform you, Mr. Chair, that following a review by the Minimum Wage Board, the decision to increase the minimum wage was announced in December of 1998. Effective April 1, 1999, the minimum wage was increased by 11 percent to \$6 an hour. I would like to acknowledge the considerable time and effort taken by the individuals and organizations that submitted their views and concerns

regarding the minimum wage. I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to the chair and members of the Minimum Wage Board for their valuable contribution.

In addition to the Minimum Wage Board, very important work was undertaken over the past year by the department's other external advisory committees such as the advisory council on Workplace Safety and Health, the Manitoba Pension Commission, the Labour Management Review Committee. On behalf of the province, I would like to thank the members of all advisory boards and committees for their commitment and advice.

A seminar was held December 10, 1998, to provide Manitoba business, labour leaders, and academics with information on the operation of the North American Agreement on Labour Cooperation. This seminar featured a number of high profile speakers on labour issues.

The Department of Labour continues to make progress with business planning, with performance measurement in service quality to provide improved client service and program delivery. The Department of Labour remains committed to a strategy of change, improvement, and innovation through the use of business planning and results-based management. In recognition of the priority given to staff development, the Department of Labour will implement a competency-based employee profile system that was developed in co-operation with the Civil Service Commission. This system, known as access labour, will provide a profile of employees' skills and competencies. In addition, the system will provide a profile of the various jobs performed in the department. Once established, the system will form the foundation for an integrated human resource management system including training, succession planning, and career development.

Senior departmental officials continue to actively participate in the Better Methods and Better Systems of government-wide initiatives. The Better Methods initiative is currently introducing a systems applications product, euphemistically referred to as SAP, that will allow all provincial departments to use the same

financial, purchasing, and human resource systems.

I would like to now speak briefly about program achievements and plans. I would like to highlight some of the achievements and plans of the departmental operations. Last year, the Worker Advisor Office, through its early intervention initiative, provided information and assistance to over 400 workers who were successful in resolving their issues without having to pursue more formal levels of appeal. This represents an increase of 212 individuals from the previous year. The office continues to focus on providing more timely resolution of claims by concentrating efforts at the primary adjudication level of the Workers Compensation Board appeal process rather than the more lengthy appeal levels. This effort has resulted in 70 percent of the appealable issues being resolved at this level.

In the past year the Labour adjustment unit has facilitated and provided labour adjustment services to numerous organizations including Unisys, Dominion Bridge, Cal-West Textiles at Portage la Prairie, Pelican Lake Centre, Shamray Group, Black Hawk Mines in Lynn Lake. As well, Mr. Chair, the unit played a major role in assisting workers and the local community affected by the decommissioning of the Whiteshell Laboratories in Pinawa.

The Office of the Fire Commissioner has completed its third year as a special operating agency. The firefighter training programs that are provided to the Manitoba municipal fire service have been revamped and made more user friendly and accessible to all Manitoba fire departments. This year the Office of the Fire Commissioner ran the first accreditation process for fire investigators in the province.

In accordance with the agency's marketing plan, the Emergency Services College was successful in securing over \$125,000 in training contracts from external clients. In co-operation with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and the Manitoba Building Officials Association, a building inspection training program was developed for delivery to municipal building officials.

The Conciliation and Mediation Branch continues to maintain a strong record for facilitating the resolution of labour relation disputes. During the year ending March 31, 1999, the branch was active in 178 grievance mediation and 106 conciliation assignments. With the upgrade to a newer computer system, all conciliation officers now have laptop units with the capability of connecting to the office system from the field.

The Manitoba Labour Board is an independent and quasi-judicial body to help resolve labour relations issues in a fair and reasonable manner.

The Workplace Safety and Health Division targets its resources to industry sectors that have the highest risk of injury. The mining sector, which is a high-risk sector, has improved by a factor of five in the past 20 years. Injury rates are now at the lowest level ever, 2.9 time loss in injury per 100 workers. The injury rate for all industries in the province has remained constant for the past five years at 3.4 time-loss injuries per one hundred workers.

In co-operation with the Workers Compensation Board, the division is providing enhanced ergonomics services to Manitoba industry, directed at high-risk manufacturing sectors to reduce the cost of injuries.

Mr. Chair, regulatory changes have recently been made to The Pension Benefits Act which are intended to reduce the likelihood of a plan winding up with insufficient funds for plan members. The new regulations provide retiring members and plan members who have terminated their membership in a plan with greater flexibility in dealing with pension assets by introducing the locked-in retirement income fund or LRIF which I referred to earlier. During the development of these changes, the Pension Commission consulted its actuarial liaison committee representing local and national actuarial consulting firms and financial institutions offering pension-related products. The introduction of the LRIF was in direct response to demands from the financial services industry, as well as a growing segment of the population who wish to retain a greater control over the investment of their pension assets.

This now completes my opening statements, Mr. Chair, and I look forward to a meaningful review and discussion of the 1999-2000 program Estimates of the Department of Labour. Thank you.

* (1500)

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable minister for the opening statement. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member for Transcona, have an opening statement?

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Chairperson, I will just be very brief in my opening comments. I listened carefully to what the minister was saying. I have many questions in each of the individual subdepartments of the overall Department of Labour, which we can get into in a few moments. If it will help the minister and his staff with respect to the number of people that we have here today, I am not certain we are going to get to all of the sections of his department. So if there are others perhaps who would, for example, be in the Fire Commissioner's office who may have other duties that they may wish to tend to today, I do not anticipate that we will be arriving at that point.

There may be other sections towards the end of the Estimates process which we will not get to today, as well. It is my intention to proceed through section by section of the Estimates book, if that will help the minister in determining his staff time that is here today.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable member. Under Manitoba practice, debate of the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for the Estimates of the department. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of this item and now proceed with the consideration of the next line.

Before we do that, we would invite the minister to invite his staff to join us at the table, and we ask the minister to introduce his staff as they are present.

Mr. Radcliffe: I would invite staff to step forward at this time. We have joining us today the deputy minister, Mr. Tom Farrell; the

assistant deputy minister, Mr. Jim Nykoluk; and Mr. Jim Wood who is our financial services person.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the minister. We will now proceed to line 11.1. Labour Executive (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits on page 114 in the main Estimates book, \$409,700. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Reid: Mr. Chairperson, I would like to welcome the minister's staff here once again. I think we have to stop making a habit of this, at least from my perspective on this side of the table. It will be nice to, for once, be up there and be able to make direct use of their services in response to questions. So I look forward to that opportunity in the future of working more closely with the staff of the Department of Labour.

In regard to the specific questions dealing with Executive Support, I believe this is the appropriate section dealing with the staff that the minister would have working directly with him. If not, he can advise and the Chairperson can advise in respect to who the minister's special assistant and executive assistant are.

Mr. Radcliffe: My special assistant is an individual by the name of Brad Kirbyson, and my executive assistant is an individual by the name of Douglas McLandress.

Mr. Reid: Can the minister indicate, do the salaries for these two individuals come out of the Executive Support staff line?

Mr. Radcliffe: I would add, as well, that there is another individual who works in an assisting position in the office. His salary line is paid for, I believe, by the Workers Comp Board, but that is an individual who acts as a liaison by the name of Daniel Robinson. Yes, Mr. Chair, my honourable colleague is correct that these salary levels do come out of the departmental line, and the executive assistant is paid at the rate of \$41,400; the special assistant at \$44,600. These rates are based on the levels paid to the previous incumbents.

Mr. Reid: The minister indicates that there is a Mr. Robinson who is also working with him. Is

Mr. Robinson seconded from the Worker Advisor Office or from the Workers Compensation Board to work directly with the minister? Is it for the purposes of casework dealing with the Workers Compensation system or act?

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Robinson's salary is paid for by the Workers Comp Board. He is answerable and responsible to the minister. His role is to act on behalf of the minister on issues arising out of Workers Comp Board claims or files. He liaises with the board itself whenever there is a necessity to speak to the board to find out information. He maintains files on individuals who phone the minister's office or visit the minister's office with particular issues and he attempts to relate with those individuals on a face-to-face basis to solve or explain their difficulties and help the individuals resolve them, arising out of their experience with the Workers Comp Board or the Workers Comp Board Appeal Commission.

Mr. Reid: So then Mr. Robinson is actually a staff person of the Workers Compensation Board paid directly by them but seconded for the minister's use for that specific purpose.

* (1510)

Mr. Radcliffe: Yes, my honourable colleague is correct, that he is seconded from the board to assist the minister.

Mr. Reid: Is this a standard practice, for ministers of Labour to second someone from the compensation employee staff to work within the office on cases involving claimants of the board, the calls the minister would be getting? Is this a standard practice of his predecessors, for example?

Mr. Radcliffe: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Reid: Can the minister tell me, in the Executive Support, are the individuals that he has named here today on his special assistant and his executive assistant at salary range maximums for those individual positions? Whereabouts do they fall in their classifications for those individuals, because there are codings that are available.

Mr. Radcliffe: The executive assistant's nomenclature for the position is just EXA. I am told that the salary range for an individual in this category biweekly is \$1,493.50 to \$1,689.98. The SA is categorized as an SPA. His range is \$1,624.00 to \$1,840.28 biweekly.

Mr. Reid: Well, I recognize there are min and max ranges for each of the designations. I am just trying to figure out where the individuals fit within that range. The minister is telling me biweekly numbers. You are mixing apples and oranges here. So if you can give me your annual number then I would have a better understanding of where they fit within that range.

Mr. Radcliffe: I do not have the annualized ranges, but I am told that they are both midrange in their categories and have some significant room for growth.

Mr. Reid: In the Executive Support, I hope, Mr. Chairperson, that we can talk about the whole area of Executive Support. I know you have just mentioned the one number there, but if we can just talk about that complete section, it can facilitate movement through that area.

Mr. Chairperson: What is the will of the committee? Is it the will of the committee that we allow some flexibility and freedom? [agreed]

Mr. Reid: Under the Other Expenditures there has been showing a significant change with respect to transportation. Now, I take it that there are—maybe I should just ask the question first. Is this part of the department utilizing vehicles from the Fleet Vehicles agency of the province and, if so, how many?

Mr. Radcliffe: The minister and the deputy minister both use vehicles from the government fleet.

Mr. Reid: Can you indicate to me what the cost is to the department for the use of those vehicles if you have a breakdown, or are there similar costs for both of them?

Mr. Radcliffe: I am told that I am a bargain to the Department of Labour because, being an urban member, I do not enjoy the rural rates that the previous incumbent did, and the rates that the

deputy and the minister have are apparently comparable.

Mr. Reid: Can the minister indicate to me, since the rates are comparable, what the rates are?

Mr. Radcliffe: I will have to take that question as notice.

An Honourable Member: Oh, no, not already.

Mr. Radcliffe: That is right. I will have to get back to the member on that, because we will have to get that information from Fleet Vehicles.

Mr. Reid: All right, I understand some of the questions may be asking for more detail than what you might have available here. I look forward to receiving that information, hopefully, before the month is out; I would hope that it should be available. I know that there are ministers in the past who had a bit of a practice of providing information after the session is long over, in fact, into the early fall. I hope I can get a commitment from the minister to have the information I am requesting here today in a more timely fashion than several months later.

Mr. Radcliffe: I will be as expeditious as I know how to be, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Reid: That is what they all said.

Can the minister indicate then, since there has been I think it is an \$8,000 increase in the Transportation line of your Executive Support budget, what is the increase? It went from \$22,900 up to \$30,900. Can you indicate what activities you are undertaking, or you have more cars within the department that would come out of this line? What are the reasons for the increase in your transportation costs?

Mr. Radcliffe: I am told, Mr. Chair, that the rates from Fleet Vehicles have increased over the past year. I am also told that the allocated amounts previously did not cover the expenses in the department for the operation of the vehicles, so the allotment of funds for this category has increased as well. So it has been an increase on two heads, on the rate and on the allotment.

Mr. Reid: So the \$8,000 that I am referencing here would be for the increases in the rate and the allotment of those two vehicles, one for the minister and one for the deputy minister. That makes up that \$8,000 that we are talking about.

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chair, I am pleased to tell my honourable colleague that the guesstimate of staff at this point is that approximately half of the \$8,000 rise, or \$4,000, is allocated to an increase for vehicles, and \$4,000 is an increase estimated for air travel for members of the department.

Mr. Reid: Can the minister indicate now, is this dealing with labour relations type of issues that we would have this staff travel budget, I take it, of \$4,000? Is that the purpose? Perhaps you can explain what the purpose of that travel for the staff would be within the province during the coming year.

Mr. Radcliffe: I am advised, Mr. Chair, that the deputy minister is on the board of the Occupational Health and Safety for Canada, which necessitates four trips to Hamilton, Ontario, a year. The deputy is also the past chair of the deputies for the provinces of Canada, which necessitates two trips a year, if in fact he takes those. Those are not as of high a priority level now that he is no longer the chair, but the Occupational Safety ones are a matter of some profile, and he does follow up on those.

Mr. Reid: Can the minister then give me some background on what activities take place during the course of those meetings for which the staff were either chairing or participating in those committees? In what way does this facilitate the Department of Labour in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Radcliffe: I am advised that the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety is a grouping of individuals representing labour, business and government. This board or group provides technical advice, technical expertise, to employers and to labour in Canada. The deputy minister provides input into this board or group. It formulates policy. It also shares, and it is an educational tool for discussing and learning about emerging issues in health and safety. Individuals like Mr. Dick Martin, I am told, of

the CLC have been participants in this group in past years.

* (1520)

I am told that there is a computer disk of information that is produced on a regular basis by this group which disseminates this information back to the department in Manitoba and that the deputy minister in fact has input into the material that goes onto the disk for educational purposes, for communication purposes, to keep everybody abreast of recent developments in the country.

The deputy tells me that he also has attended the North American Agreement on Labour Cooperation, which is a national body. I believe that Manitoba occupied the position as deputy chair of this group last year. This is an international body that speaks to labour issues between Canada, United States and Mexico. We are now no longer the deputy on that committee at this time, but that did necessitate some meetings down east as well and face to face encounters with the federal counterparts.

The deputy minister has also been to ministers' meetings in a support liaison position with my previous incumbent. The deputy also, when he occupied the position of chair of labour deputies, did some travelling to committee meetings to participate in research activity with counterparts from other provinces.

Mr. Reid: Does the deputy minister also involve himself or perhaps some staff in the department with the Fire Commissioner's office activities dealing with trying to gather contracts for the department or the Fire College in Brandon, if that is the appropriate term to use to describe it. Perhaps there is a more appropriate term.

Is that part of the work that the deputy minister or their staff would do in conjunction with the department? [interjection] Well, he survived three of you guys.

Mr. Radcliffe: The deputy does not do any marketing function for the deputy fire commissioner's office. In fact, the deputy fire commissioner's office has gone on two Team

Canada junkets to, I think, South America or Central America. That has been at the behest of and at the expense of the federal government.

* (1530)

Mr. Reid: Can the minister tell me, other ministers of Health, for example, Attorneys General, get together across Canada and meet to talk about issues. Do ministers of Labour get together as well across Canada and have meetings about issues that may be of common interest? If so, when was the last one, what issues were discussed, and is there another one anticipated for the near future?

Mr. Radcliffe: I am told that in fact indeed the ministers of Labour for Canada do get together on an intermittent basis. The last such meeting held by the ministers of Labour was in January 1998 in Hull, Quebec. We have just received notice within the last number of days that my Canadian counterparts are planning another similar meeting to be held either in December 1999 or late January 2000. The destination has not been set as of yet, but there is a possibility it could be either Toronto or New Brunswick.

Mr. Reid: Since there is usually correspondence that would be attached to an advice notice of a potential meeting in the future, can you tell me has there been items that have been placed on the agenda as possible topics of discussion for that coming meeting?

Mr. Radcliffe: I am advised that there are a number of items that are on the agenda right now and some that are being contemplated. One of the issues that is on the agenda right now is the whole subject of extreme forms of child labour. This emanates from the ILO or the International Labour Organization.

Then the next item would be the labour impacts in Canada from the North American Free Trade Agreement. The provinces are being canvassed as well to see if they have any other issues that they wish placed on the agenda, and Manitoba is contemplating at this point putting on the agenda the issue of the objective-based new building codes as a point for discussion. That is something for an issue to be debated across the country.

As well, there will be the issue of interprovincial co-operation on exchange of information between the various departments of Labour across the country.

Mr. Reid: Are those the only four items that will be on the agenda, or are there other items that the minister can perhaps indicate for us here today?

Mr. Radcliffe: The items that I have just mentioned to my honourable colleague are the only items that we know at this point in time. However, customarily in the past, there have been other issues that do come forward as one gets closer to the prospective date and when other ministers and deputies and staff start addressing the issue of what they would like to see discussed. So there will be growth on the agenda items, but these are the ones that I am discussing right at this point in time.

Mr. Reid: Are there background papers that have been circulated with each of these proposed topic areas? Do we have such information within our province that would give the minister some briefing prior to whoever, he or she at the time, may be dealing with this particular meeting, so that they might be aware of what the range of discussion will be on those chosen topic areas at this point in time?

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that in fact the deputy minister for the Ministry of Labour in Saskatchewan has taken a lead position and is, in fact, currently on her way to Regina to discuss the issue on an international basis on the ILO facet of extreme child labour. There are background papers on this topic, which are being reviewed at this point in time and I am told will be available sometime in September or October for the attention of the minister.

The National Research Council has material on the building codes, which would be provided for the minister's benefit at the appropriate time when we get a little closer.

I am told that our Department of Labour in Manitoba will prepare a review of the experience under free trade over the past four years, from the Manitoba perspective, this fall as well.

Mr. Reid: So the Ministry of Labour for Saskatchewan is going to do the child labour agenda item or proposed agenda item; Manitoba Labour department and ministry is going to look at the labour impact as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The minister can correct me if I am wrong on that. Can you tell me, if you are going to talk about the building codes, are we taking a position to that particular ministerial meetings? What specific aspect of the building codes are we referencing here? What would be the position that we would take to those meetings?

Mr. Radcliffe: All right, just to add to the record for the benefit of my honourable colleague. Saskatchewan is at this point in time taking an initiative now with the child labour issue, but there will be more input, preparation and research done by Manitoba prior to the meeting of ministers on this issue. So Saskatchewan and Manitoba, I believe, would be co-operating, but Manitoba would be addressing the issue of child labour in Manitoba itself, as well, and we would want to do some research on what were the parameters of this topic in Manitoba, if any. You know, does it exist, and if so, how extensive is it, and how does it fit into the general fabric of society?

On the objective building codes, this is a new concept. Right now I have had limited exposure, I can tell my honourable colleague, to building codes, but only from the perspective of being a solicitor. Nonetheless, right now they are quite letter-specific as to what is demanded for construction, either home construction, obviously, or commercial construction of different types. For example, a building code might say that there shall be 2 x 4 used in wall supports with having 16-inch centres, and that is mandatory, regulatory and letter-specific.

* (1540)

The concept that is being considered is saying instead of specifying exactly what materials should be used or how it should be used is to consider what result one wants to obtain or end up with. So what one wants is walls that will stay erect, that will hold up, that will be strong, and so the building code would be moving to a series of statements which would

specify what strength one would want in one's walls for different types of construction. Then the how-to, or the specificity of how one gets there, would be left unstated, and that would be up to the individual contractor. It would be a declaration of the results that would be desirable in construction, rather than the incremental step-by-step preparation to get to that level or to get to that final result.

Mr. Reid: Well, I guess it might provide you with some more flexibility if you were to propose a building code that would talk about strengths versus specific types of material, sizes, et cetera. I can understand that to some degree.

I guess the question I have is from the Manitoba or the Prairies' perspective, snow load in the winter time as being a major factor, and one can never really judge what is going to happen here, and I guess you can only go on three- or five-hundred-year experiences, if there is such a thing that is available, about what your loading would be. I have seen roofs that have collapsed. I mean, the frozen food facility over in the St. Boniface Industrial Park collapsed this past winter. One has to understand, I guess, that there were perhaps problems with that roof, although it is a fairly new facility, so you would wonder what happened with that structure.

I also have questions with respect to the way that The Construction Industry Wages Act was deregulated last year with respect to the trades. You have the potential here now, and I caution you on the direction you are heading here.

If you have people that are what might be termed to be less than fully qualified tradespeople constructing homes, for example—I use that as an example in the province here, because it is deregulated now and you are going to have all sorts of people moving into that area as the wages fluctuate, perhaps down, and your higher-skilled people would move off to other areas to attain or to retain their income level—it could put at risk, if you have less than knowledgeable tradespeople, or people that call themselves carpenters, for example, that are building homes. and they do not know strengths and capacities of certain sizes of beams and lumber that would be used, and other building materials that would be used in those facilities.

So I guess the question that arises out of that is: whom are we going to rely on to provide that guarantee or that assurance that our buildings, including our homes, have been constructed in a safe fashion? Is it going to be the engineers, the building permit or licencing body, for example, the City of Winnipeg License Branch here, that will provide a review of the building documents that would come in for a particular structure prior to issuing of those permits?

If that is the case, I have some experience that they cannot fulfill their mandate as it stands now, and I know that from first-hand experiences from my own trade. I have to wonder what is going to happen down the road if they cannot do the engineering evaluations of those particular documents prior to someone actually less than full skill level starting construction on those facilities.

So I have a whole range of cautions that I throw out here that the minister would want to consider and perhaps comment on.

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the aspect of The Construction Industry Wages Act that was deregulated in this past year was the rates of pay relating to the particular tradesmen, but the building codes apparently still apply. In fact, the Department of Labour is running some classes right now, running courses, on training building inspectors so that rural municipalities will have the opportunity to have a source of building inspectors to draw from.

The association of municipalities and the Manitoba Building Officials Association are running a building inspection training program which was developed for delivery to municipal building officials, but I certainly do acknowledge my honourable colleague's admonition in this respect. In fact, I think that, when there are demands in the building market, specifically, say, in house building, when there is a surge for new homes, often the market does employ people who are framers who perhaps have the skill to pick up a hammer and saw. So this something that is obviously of continual concern. I think that the regulatory framework and fabric must continue to be aware of that and control the activity in order to ensure safety.

Mr. Reid: I am sure the minister and the staff know full well that if you are making \$20-some an hour as a carpenter and the market gets deregulated and your boss says: I can no longer afford to pay you that level, either take \$10 or \$12 an hour, otherwise I will lay you off and find somebody else, I mean, that is a reality of life. That is what happens in the marketplace. Those that are in business building homes or other structures are in business to make money. If they can do it with cheaper labour costs, that is usually where the market heads.

One of their primary costs in any construction project is the labour costs. When we deregulated the house building sector, yes, it was the wage rates that you deregulated, but you have to be realistic and expect that if someone is making \$20 an hour, they are not going to stick around for a job that is going to pay them \$10 an hour when they perhaps can go elsewhere in the marketplace and still achieve the same level of income. So there may be an opportunity for others to get into the building trade for building homes but perhaps they do not possess the same skill level. So I am a bit apprehensive about what the future holds.

I hope this does not come to pass that we have substandard structures constructed. I just throw the caution out that there is that potential for that to happen. When you do go to talk about your new objective building codes, that some consideration be given to how you define that, I think you have to be very cautious of how you do that, to make sure that there are going to be people in the municipalities, for example, that are going to have that delegated responsibility to oversee the approval of those building plans that would actually do that engineering inspection of those drawings prior to the issuance of a work permit or a building permit for those particular projects.

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

I can tell the minister from my own experience in the electrical trade that those final inspections, for example, on new structures involving the electrical systems in a home, my own personal experience is quite often the inspectors do not come for final inspections.

They come for the rough-in inspection. The finals are not done. I know that in my own case, having been involved in the construction of several buildings, and I know the same occurs in other areas.

I have a constituent, and I have drawn this case to the minister's predecessor with respect to a home on John Duncan Drive in Transcona, where the building inspectors did not go in and do the final inspection in that home. I can tell the minister that the fans in that home were not vented. Everyone knows that new materials going into a new home have a fair amount of moisture in them, including the lumber and the concrete basement. The bathroom and kitchen fans were all vented into the basement and were like that for a year, and the family could not figure out why they were getting sick. I have drawn this, in Question Period, to the minister's predecessor.

What occurred was there was a heaving of the floor. The floor joist warped, heaved, pushed everything up in the house. Mould and mildew developed throughout the house, including the furniture, totally destroying that particular structure from being inhabited. So I know that that particular structure did not have final inspection because I requested that information from the City of Winnipeg in writing and they could not provide it for me.

I do know that they have a shortage of inspectors to go into structures to do those inspections. They have told me quite clearly that they do ad hoc inspections. So I draw this to your attention, as the new minister for the department, to be very cautious with respect to, yes, you may put in place that this is the law or the regulation, but if there is not the enforcement mechanism in place to go into those particular structures to make sure that they are constructed in a safe and reliable fashion that we could be putting at risk the families and, in the sense of other structures, other occupants, whether it be a workplace or a family home. So I draw that to your attention.

* (1550)

That particular home at 64 John Duncan Drive, which is on public record already, from

my understanding the family is out of that. They are in the process of going through the courts. That was the final course of action, but the home builder, Kensington Homes, has decided not to pursue this. In fact, their insurance company is going to pay out the resident homeowners of that. It is my understanding that that home is going to be bulldozed, which is a new home just slightly over a year old, because it cannot be reclaimed as a result of problems through lack of inspection. So I draw this to your attention of what the consequences are.

There are legal consequences as a result of this when the family is in the process of moving into the courts for a resolution of this matter. It is going to be settled, from my understanding, out of court, but that home will not longer be habitable as a result. The City of Winnipeg has zeroed the property tax on that home. So the home no longer has any value and it is only the actual property itself that has taxable value. So you can see, once that decision is made, the city is very serious about protecting the family, and they know that it is uninhabitable.

In that sense, I draw that to your attention, and ask the questions with respect to the term objective new building codes. Perhaps you can describe for me what you mean in that sense of that description there. I will ask you a further question in a moment with respect to an issue I raised in the Estimates last year with respect to building codes.

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chairman, my honourable colleague has given me a lot of material to respond to and, just very cursorily, I guess I would indicate that at the present time an observation of mine from the vantage point that I have right now in my task in government as an MLA for River Heights and for an individual who sits on Treasury Board that I have had occasion to observe that the construction market and the trades right now are very well employed in Manitoba. In fact, I think that the unemployment level is minimal at this point in time. The building market is so hot that in fact a number of public buildings that have gone to tender, the tenders that have been supplied have been significantly over the initial estimation. I can cite for my honourable colleague's edification, Montrose School.

An Honourable Member: In your own community.

Mr. Radcliffe: In my community which I had personal—

An Honourable Member: Which has a daycare in it.

Mr. Radcliffe: Absolutely, which has a daycare in it, and that leads me to another topic. But I will not get into that one today. I can only say that I was horrified when I saw the estimates come back from all the tendered contracts way and above over what we had been led to believe was a reasonable level to expect from Government Services estimators. It caused us to rethink the whole financing of that project, and which we did through the Public Schools Finance Board. Nonetheless that is a product of a hot economy which we have here in Manitoba right now, which I can only attribute at least in part to the good government that the Filmon government has been provided.

An Honourable Member: How did I know that one was coming?

Mr. Radcliffe: You could see that one coming. With regard to the horror story of this John Duncan Drive incident, I can only emphasize with the individuals involved because that really does sound like an awful, awful story. I think it points to the fact of inspections which I think my honourable colleague has correctly pointed out rather than the issue of building codes, per se.

If you have any sort of building code, be it objective or specific, that is not complied with, then you are going to have travesties of justice of this nature, so it is something I can emphasize with the individuals involved.

I am told that the National Research Council has some extensive written material on objective building codes which I would be pleased to supply to my honourable colleague. I think that is perhaps a day or two away. [interjection] It is a briefing note that we have.

Mr. Reid: I would appreciate if the minister or his staff could forward it so we could have a look at that as well. When you are in your

discussions with respect to your objective building codes too, and I draw this again to your attention, it affects my community. I am sure it affects many communities around the province that have dwellings that are constructed with single door access or exit. I know there has been a shift in this province a number of years back to allow for that construction to take place, and I drew it to the attention of the minister's predecessor.

I have calls to my office during the course of the big snowstorms that we have, and we all know that we have six months of winter and six months of bad sledding. We also know that there are problems that are associated when we get those snowfalls. In some of the homes, and it may happen in the rural areas as well, if you have homes or buildings that are constructed with a single door, if you get snow packed up against those doors and they open outwards, as they are supposed to do, in the event, for example, a woodstove in your home or a fireplace, and if you have a fire in there and you only have one door to get out of there, and you are trapped in that part of the building, you burn to death because you cannot get out.

In the course of a snowstorm, and if you are in your home during a snowstorm and you are trying to stay warm, so there is potential there to have some problems as a result of snow pack, and I have calls on this from my constituents who cannot get out their front doors. They have single homes or side by sides or semidetached structures. Perhaps the Minister of Housing (Mr. Reimer) is familiar with some of those units because his department is in possession and control of some of those facilities in my own community, so I draw that to your attention again. I think there needs to be some consideration given to the safety factor with respect to dwelling units and perhaps workplaces, places of business that would have single door access to them.

Now one might say that, well, in the event of a fire you pick up some piece of furniture and throw it through a window or push the window out, but if you have sealed pane units, they are tripanes or whatever, then that may not always be a reasonable way to escape that particular structure, so I am not sure how you solve it.

There are other experts in this province and in this country that perhaps know better than I on how you solve that, but I draw it to your attention again as a safety factor for some of our communities. We want to make sure that our families are safe and that our workplaces are safe as well, so I leave that with you on that aspect of it.

With respect to the issue of child labour, and this goes back to the ministerial meetings that you are going to be having, I drew to the attention of your predecessor as well that because we have what seems to be an increase in the film industry in the province. We read it again in the paper this week. I think that is a positive step for our province to have that industry grow here, and I am happy to see that take place, but I draw to the attention of you as the new minister that there are issues that need to be dealt with with respect to child labour. I draw to your attention the province of British Columbia that has had, for some time, a very strong film industry and has had to deal with this issue some time ago. Perhaps you can draw from their experience and use their regulations that they have in place to safeguard against what would be considered child labour, not only just in the film industry, but the regulation they have applies particularly to that particular sector of their economy. You can draw perhaps on their experience as some guidance for the department in dealing with child labour in that sector, the film industry sector. Perhaps there are other jurisdictions that have experience as well dealing with child labour in other areas.

Now, it takes me to the next question because I know in the Estimates last year there was some discussion here that the Department of Labour had contracted or had been involved with a youth work survey, an underage youth work survey. I would like to know what the results are that came about as a result of that particular survey, and if you have that detail here today so that I might be able to see global responses to the questions that you would have available to the department.

* (1600)

Mr. Radcliffe: I am pleased to be able to inform my honourable colleague that, with the

youth work survey, the data have been collected, the report is in a draft form at this point in time, and the data are about to be released next Tuesday, in Ottawa, at the Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation, called CAALL, I am told.

Just to comment on the data that have been collected. I am told that there is a lack of appreciation, or a lack of knowledge, of employers in Manitoba of labour legislation per se, but the department is attending to that and disseminating the information.

More importantly, the department has not found any breaches where youth have been abused or misemployed, and so there is no reason for remedial action or punitive action or charges to be laid with the research.

Mr. Reid: Well, I mean, I could share some horror stories with the minister, if he wants, about youth being taken advantage of, but I do not think that was the intent of the survey to start with. I think it was to determine—because I have seen draft copies of the survey that you have out now. You may have refined it since that for distribution to the students last summer and fall. Perhaps maybe I should ask that. Do you have a copy of that survey here, so that we would make sure that we see the working copy that went out to the students?

Mr. Radcliffe: We can provide that tomorrow. Tricky. We can provide that on Monday, given, of course, that we are still here on Monday.

Mr. Reid: Yes, well, I think that we will be here on Monday. Now, in my understanding, that particular survey was to inquire amongst the youth in our schools, and I think, you can correct me if I am wrong, that that did not go to all the high schools and junior highs in the province.

Do you have a list for me of where that particular survey was distributed? Do you have any kind of number of surveys that went out and a percentage response of the returns that came back from each of those particular facilities? If you have them by facility list or name, that would help.

* (1610)

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the survey canvassed 700 young people throughout Manitoba in the spring of '98. These were individuals located in 10 schools throughout the province. There were six in Winnipeg, two in northern Manitoba and two in southern Manitoba. The grade levels that were canvassed were Grades 10 to 12. There was a focus testing done on younger children in the junior high and the results were not considered to be sufficiently accurate for the younger children. Therefore, their information was not collated or proceeded with.

The results were a hundred percent response because, in fact, there was co-operation with the schools, and the surveys were done face to face. It was not just mailing out forms and expecting people to blindly fill out the blanks and then send them back in. It was a face-to-face communication, so there was a hundred percent uptake on the individuals that were surveyed.

Mr. Reid: I think, if I recall correctly, it was Mr. Cy Gonick who was involved with that particular survey.

Can you tell me, because it almost sounds like from what the minister describes as a face-to-face meetings with individuals, which seems like quite an onerous process to go through, how did this take place? Were these surveys distributed to the students in the classroom, for example? What process was used to conduct that particular survey where you would be assured of 100 percent return?

Mr. Radcliffe: I am told, Mr. Chairman, that there were six University of Manitoba students that were employed in this project. They went from classroom to classroom. They had a face-to-face encounter in the class with the young people involved. They handed out the forms, remained in the class to be responsive to questions from the students, advised them, directed them, helped them on how to fill out the forms where help was required.

My honourable colleague is correct that Mr. Cy Gonick has been directing and leading this project. He has been absent from the province for, I think, about six weeks at this point in time, so that has been one of the delays in collating all

the information at this point, but that was the process that was employed for picking up the information itself.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Reid: Well, I understand that there may be some difficulties in the final information or the executive summary or whatever you want to call it that may be coming forward as a result of that. Seven hundred students were surveyed.

I had asked for a list of the schools that were used in the survey, and I am wondering if you have that. Can you tell me also the list of criteria that were used to select the schools? I would like to know the process that was used to arrive at the questioning and also the process of selection and other criteria maybe used to determine how you interpret the data that came back.

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that Mr. Cy Gonick in fact was instrumental in developing the original framework for the survey. The survey then was circulated to the jurisdictions in western Canada for comment and input. That was then collated and assessed. The different departments of the Manitoba government were also consulted. The Department of Education was consulted and our Workplace Safety and Health. From the perspective of our Workplace Safety and Health, the concerns or issues that were involved were: were children working, where were they working and were they at risk. That was some of the criteria that formed some of the questions that was the underlying base for the survey.

We do not have the names of the schools right now. We can supply that and will undertake so to do on Monday. The criteria used for picking the schools was to be of a representative capacity, so that is why there is some urban, some rural, some northern and some southern. It was representative as to income as well.

That formed some of the thinking into the selection, and I am told also one of their major criteria was which schools were responsive, because there was in fact co-operation and uptake from the schools that were attended. I

presume that there were schools that did not respond, but in fact we can tell you the schools that did.

The criteria for interpreting the data, I am told at this point in time, it is a straight factual recitation coming in dealing with percentages of people working, where they worked. It is a recounting of data. There has not been any interpretation done on the material to date.

Mr. Reid: The minister references students or youth at risk. Selection was done by income and school response. I am not sure—

Mr. Radcliffe: Schools were selected having in mind income as one determines to make it representative, i.e., and I am putting my own words on it from what I interpret from the answer from my associate here, that not all the schools in Tuxedo or not all the schools in Transcona or not all the schools in Churchill were used. In other words, to make it broad-based and representative of a cross-section of our Manitoba community, not necessarily income of the parents of the children being surveyed. I would not want my honourable colleague to think that that was the answer to the problem but looking at the demographics of the area in which the school was found having no knowledge of the income base of the particular families to which those children belonged.

Mr. Reid: Then perhaps, I take it the department was briefed or involved in the survey, because you provided funding and support for that particular survey. Can you tell me, refresh my memory with respect to the cost of that survey, are the final costs in? Can you tell me, do you have a briefing paper or something on it that would lay out what the process was going to be with respect to that particular survey that we might be able to get a copy of?

Mr. Radcliffe: I am told that the funding for this survey was in the neighbourhood of \$40,000 and this has been supplied at this point in time. We can produce the briefing notes on Monday.

Mr. Reid: Perhaps you can give me a breakdown of that \$40,000 with respect to the costs that were associated as well, so I might

understand how those monies were spent. Can you tell me, because you have only surveyed, I think, you said high schools that were under your survey, selected high schools—if I recall the questions of the survey correctly, it was to understand from youth their experiences entering the workforce as new employees, either on full or part-time basis.

I am wondering why we have not made an effort to go after information that would perhaps be held by underage youth in the workforce, because I know the province issues what, 500 underage work permits a year, which is a fair number. You issue that many permits, and you have only surveyed 700 high school students, so there is not much difference between the two numbers there. Why would we not survey the underage youth who probably have less knowledge of their rights and less ability to speak up in the workforce than high school students who are a bit more sure of themselves? I ask the question why we did not focus on junior high school students as well.

* (1620)

Mr. Radcliffe: I am told that Mr. Gonick did do a focus group with children in the younger category. It was his decision after doing the focus group that he did not feel that they had the maturity to understand conceptually what the nature of the exercise was, and so he did not feel comfortable with the information that he elicited that it was appropriate for the study. So it was his decision to restrict the survey to the children in Grades 10 to 12 because of their intellectual, and I guess emotional, maturity.

Mr. Reid: Well, I do not know if this is something that has been considered or not, but I will float it. I would think that the youth underage, under legal working age in the province, would potentially be at risk. Would there not be some way to have a survey of those ones perhaps that the department issues the underage work permits to, to survey those students to find out what their experiences are and what their knowledge level is with respect to the labour laws, the Workplace Safety and Health laws, Workers Compensation, et cetera, to make sure that they are knowledgeable about what their rights are too, to make sure that they

are not put at risk? I am just wondering if it is possible to survey those 500 that we issued the permits to, or however many specific number, but I think it is generally around 500 a year.

Mr. Radcliffe: I thank my honourable colleague for that suggestion. I think that is something that has some real merit to it. I am told that when individuals apply for permits to employ underage children, educational information is distributed at that time to the permittee. The reaction of the department is such that very likely the individuals involved who come forward and request and obtain a permit and obtain the information are very likely not the individuals with whom we should be concerned, but perhaps there might be another group in the community who are not coming forward. Nonetheless, what my honourable colleague suggests is something that has some merit and something we would be prepared to look at.

Mr. Reid: I am worried that those youth, and I have looked back at the curriculum for the Department of Education dealing with issues relating to Workplace Safety and Health. I am not going to go broadly into that area so that you have to bring other staff here, but just talk generally.

The curriculum that is in place through the Department of Education is somewhat lacking with respect to knowledge, passing on knowledge to our youth prior to them entering the workforce, and if there is some way to determine or to—I mean, let us be realistic here. Each of us should look in the mirror when we talk about this issue, because I guess the question I would ask is what do you do when you get a flier in the mailbox when you come home from work at the end of the day, or when you come home from school? The reality is you take that flier and you file it, and we all know where it gets filed. So when you get that pamphlet in your hand here, what is to stop someone who gets that from just disposing of it and not having a real knowledge?

I think unless we ask those questions of our youth in particular, to make sure that they are aware how to protect themselves in the workplace, to make sure that they are

knowledgeable prior to entering the workforce, we put them at risk.

I would want to have the department have a clear understanding of those because there are under-age youth who are going to work because permits are issued, and we all know of others who work in casual jobs and perhaps other jobs who do not know and who trust others to protect them in the workplace. There are people who are not always vigilant in protecting those under-age individuals, and I would want to make sure that they know prior to entering the workforce.

I know we have a lot of work to do on the curriculum side of education in the schools. That has always been a pet peeve of mine, is that we do not teach our children, my own included, because I talk to them about what they are being instructed on in the junior high and high schools now in my community, and there is very little instruction that goes on with respect to how to look after yourself when you are into the workforce.

I would hope we would take some steps to find out what their knowledge is, to find out where we need to upgrade that knowledge and then to take the steps through the curriculum to make sure that they are trained in the junior high and high schools prior to them entering the workforce.

So I throw that out for your consideration. I know I have talked about this before, and I am sounding like I am up on the stump here talking about it, but it is an issue that is important, and we have to protect our youth from having any contact with workplace injuries. If we can give them the tools necessary to prevent those injuries from happening in the workplace in the first place, I think we do them a great service prior to them entering the workforce. So I throw that out for your consideration.

I will leave that part and I know you are going to provide me with the information relating to that particular survey, the final version that went out to the schools, the list of the schools and the other criteria that were used for the selection. I will look forward to receiving that information as quickly as you can provide it.

I want to ask, because you have on the agenda for the coming meeting, the ministerial meeting at the end of this year, issues dealing not only with child labour but the labour impacts from the North American Free Trade Agreement, and I want to know what your briefing note is going to say when you go to that particular meeting with respect to what the impact has been on Manitoba labour as a result of that agreement, either pro or con, whether or not you are going to take a balanced approach to show both sides of the issue here or whether you are going to take a certain perspective to that particular meeting. I am talking about the department here now because, no doubt, they are drafting the document.

Then, perhaps, Mr. Chairperson, there may not be an election until the spring which is even likely in this case, and perhaps the current minister might even still be there.

* (1630)

Mr. Radcliffe: That is a future which we can only look forward to with much jubilation, and I commend my honourable colleague for even suggesting such a prospect.

In response to my honourable colleague's inquiry, the perspective that the briefing paper will consider on the Free Trade Agreement would be the side agreements on labour. The main thrust of the agreement deals with trade, and that would be more the parameter of Industry, Trade and Tourism, and general economic trends.

The Department of Labour will be addressing itself to the side agreements on labour itself. Specifically, for example, one of the questions will be have the various nations with whom we partner, the two nations with whom we partner, have the employers in their countries been living up to the labour laws that they have on the legislative books of their countries? This, I gather, is one of the concerns and one of the issues that the international conference concerns itself with and deals with complaints from various other labour or employment groups, presumably labour groups, I guess, from abroad.

An Honourable Member: You will not get the employers saying too much about it, will you?

Mr. Radcliffe: Well, I do not know. My honourable colleague raises the question about the employers, and I suspect sometimes that perhaps there may be other agendas from other employers that are looking for economic advantage by playing politics with the issue. That is something, I think, that you have to be aware of.

But the other aspect of the briefing note will be, well, first of all, is to ensure that each nation is maintaining a level playing field with regard to its labour force. The other aspect will be an economic analysis of employment levels in Manitoba as a result of the free trade experience, so specifically looking at areas of the economy which have been related to manufacturing and export and what levels they have maintained. So that would be a result or an effect of the Free Trade Agreement which would go into the briefing note as well.

So there is no particular interpretation, I guess, that goes into that, or analysis. That would be more of a factual nature, just recounting and reciting events rather than any analysis and conclusions being drawn.

Mr. Reid: I take it then that the briefing may not be fully drafted to this point in time. It is perhaps a bit premature to think that it would be, but is it possible when the department has the information available to have a copy of the department's position with respect to the position we are going to be taking to that particular meeting, which I take it would be into the fall? If there is no election held in that period of time, then of course there would be no change in the current circumstances that we face here today. But of course, should an election be called, then who knows what the future holds. Perhaps I may have direct access to that information in a way that I would not have to request it through this particular committee.

So if an election is not called, then perhaps could we have access to the position paper that the province would be taking to that particular meeting perhaps around the time when the department has the draft completed?

Mr. Radcliffe: I would have no problem in sharing with my honourable colleague the position of the department and therefore the position of the province with regard to the free trade issue when the time is appropriate. I am sure that his question is not moot and that it will be within my jurisdiction to share that material with him.

Mr. Reid: Well, I look forward to receiving that information and hopefully it is not after the person who is going to that meeting returns because it would be somewhat difficult to turn one's attention to that after a decision has already been made and shared with others in the North American labour meetings that will be held.

With respect to the policy, because I believe this is where the general large-scale policy decision making for the department occurs is probably under this section. If I am wrong, perhaps the minister can correct me on that because in your document it says overall policy direction is what is provided. Can you tell me is the department working on any legislative changes with respect to any of the acts that would fall under the responsibility of the Minister of Labour, and if so, what changes are being contemplated?

Mr. Radcliffe: At this point in time, and this is an issue that can change with reasonably short notice, but I am not anticipating any legislative changes to any of the labour fabric at this point, and I caution my remarks by saying that. There have been many free wide discussions on a number of different issues, but they have all been of a highly speculative and contemplative nature, and so I do not think it would be appropriate to put those on the public record at this point because there is no intention of proceeding.

I can undertake to my honourable colleague, and in fact I have done this in Consumer and Corporate Affairs, and I found it to be a very helpful process for members on both sides to share with the critic if I do change that position, to share in advance of introducing the legislation in the House the form of the legislation and give the member the opportunity to examine the document and the staff involved so that the particular critic has the opportunity to see what

the genesis of the bill is and how it has come into being.

Mr. Reid: So then perhaps I should ask the question then. Is the Labour Management Review Committee a body of people, from both labour and employers' side, representatives, that get together and meet and are in essence an advisory body to the Ministry of Labour? Have they made any suggestions to the department with respect to any changes that perhaps would be required with any of the legislation for which the department is directly responsible?

Mr. Radcliffe: The Labour Management Review Committee have not come forward with any specific suggestions for consideration either of a legislative nature or regulatory nature. I am told that there has been some material on employment standards which have been circulated but that has not reached my desk at this point in time.

Mr. Reid: Have any of the other advisory bodies for which the department has responsibility, has the minister requested any of those bodies to meet to consider certain issues or have any of them requested the department consider legislative changes or regulatory changes?

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

* (1640)

Mr. Radcliffe: In response to my honourable friend's question, there has been nothing come forward from any of the advisory bodies either at my behest or at their initiative on advice or direction. We do know that the mines regulatory committee which is a subcommittee of the minister's advisory council is doing work. That is an ongoing constant process, but I have not seen anything on that since I have had the opportunity to enjoy sitting in the chair.

Mr. Reid: I am going to try and microfocus this a little bit here. I have done this in other departments for which I have been the critic in past. I am trying to get an idea of some of the costs of operation of the department as well—the department obviously has certain costs, because

you have employees who are working for you throughout the department—and get an understanding of your Workers Compensation premiums, for example, that you would have to pay as a department. So getting an idea of your operational costs, in other words, and what your accident ratio is if we do have any accidents within the department, number of employees that are off, et cetera.

Mr. Radcliffe: A point of clarification. The honourable colleague is asking for the accident ratio, and the premiums were paid by the department for Workers Comp. Is that correct?

Mr. Reid: That is correct.

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to advise my honourable colleague that in fact there is nobody at the current time from the department that is on Workers Comp receiving any compensation from the Workers Compensation Board. The department is a self-insurer, so the department pays directly the total cost. There is no pooling from the Workers Comp for the class of employees at all. The average expense from the department in any given year, I am told, and this year is no exception, runs between \$5,000 and \$10,000 for expenses for medical claims from employees, and that is in the nature of doctor appointments and consultation of that nature. We have one employee who is receiving permanent partial disability on a monthly basis, but I am told that person does report to work on a daily basis as well and, I guess, performs at a lower level than what they were previously employed at in order to justify the pension. That is out of the Fire Commissioner's office.

Mr. Reid: So the individual was an employee of the Fire Commissioner's office and worked within the department somewhere, continues to work there, was injured on the job, has a permanent injury and is working in a job that will not place that individual at risk. Was there any loss of earnings as a result of the change that occurred in reassignment of job duties?

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chairman, I am told this particular individual still performs an inspection function or capacity and, in fact, he was the individual who is involved in inspection at the

St. Edward's fire that occurred last week in the city of Winnipeg when they had a fire in the basement in the music room.

I am not aware of what the specific disability is that he is functioning under, but I am told that as a result of the injuries that he sustained or the disability that he sustained, he is unable to perform to full capacity anymore and so therefore the opportunity for overtime is now denied to him. But he is fully functional at a performance level to make him a value for the department.

Mr. Reid: So I take it then there has been no penalty on the pay side for the individual as a result of that workplace injury. I am just trying to get an understanding here.

I understand, and I think it is appropriate that an individual would continue to be given the opportunity to work within their permanent restrictions for that same employer where possible, and would hope that there would be no penalty on the income side, so there is no loss of earnings for that individual as a result of having to take an alternate job.

Mr. Radcliffe: I am told that the particular individual, in fact, does earn the same level of pay that he did prior to his disability, and the only loss he suffered is that which I already articulated which was that he has lost the ability to perform over time.

Mr. Reid: Can the minister tell me, when we did the essential services legislation—and the minister's predecessor is here. He was, I believe, the sponsor of that particular bill. It is my understanding that the Ministry of Labour was the sponsor of that particular bill. If I am wrong in that, then correct me, because my recollection, I remember the department because I was the critic who had to speak to that particular bill, and we usually do not do that if it is not sponsored by labour.

Mr. Radcliffe: I believe, Mr. Chairman, that bill came out of the Department of Health.

Mr. Reid: I am talking about the original essential services legislation that was here a year or two ago.

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chairman, I am told that the initial bill for essential services was introduced by the Department of Finance, and the ambit of that legislation concerned itself only with government employees at that point in time. There was an amendment done in '96 which did involve the Department of Labour. So my honourable colleague would be correct that he quite appropriately did speak to that in '96 when the amendments went through which included the individuals in the health care field at that point.

* (1650)

Mr. Reid: I am just trying to get an understanding here, because The Essential Services Act affects the rights of individuals and employers with respect to strike and lock-out provisions. I thought it would have been more appropriate to be sponsored by the Ministry of Labour versus the other ministries and wondered why this Bill 27 that was dealing with the paramedics was not sponsored by the Ministry of Labour and was left to Health. Now I understand it is dealing with paramedics, but it is dealing with labour relations issues. I am wondering why the decision was made to go with Health versus Labour.

Mr. Radcliffe: I think my honourable colleague is quite correct that this is a shared responsibility, and the topic, the overall topic, is the subject of collective bargaining. The facts are that in this particular case the Ministry of Health had been contacted by the City of Winnipeg. They chose to respond to it, and it was the Department of Health that did present the amendment on the paramedics. That is just the way the events rolled out for that particular issue.

The responsibility overall for The Essentials Services Act does fall quite correctly, as my honourable colleague points out, under the Ministry of Labour, under the Department of Labour, and in fact the '96 amendment was done by the Ministry of Labour by the minister of that day.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Chairperson, I am just trying to get an understanding here then. So it was a cabinet decision then that it would remain,

because it is my understanding the cabinet would have to pass approval on any legislation that would come to the Chamber. A minister would not just do that on his own, I would not expect, without having some approval of cabinet, perhaps the Premier prior to tabling of a bill or even drafting, and that it was a cabinet decision to let the Ministry of Health deal with the paramedics, Bill 27, The Essential Services Amendment, that was before the House here last week.

Mr. Radcliffe: I do not believe that the specific issue of which ministry was appropriate to deal with the bill was an issue that was ever debated at cabinet. The sum and substance of the bill certainly was reviewed at a cabinet level and obviously approved, but I am not aware that there was any discussion at all on the cabinet basis as to which ministry did it. I think it is a simple fact of the Minister of Health was contacted by the mayor of the City of Winnipeg, the Minister of Health being responsive did respond to the issue, and the issue rolled out from there.

Mr. Reid: So, then, might we expect in the future that if other requests come in from other jurisdictions with respect to amendments to The Essential Services Act, it will be the receiving department that will be the sponsor of any of those amendments?

Mr. Radcliffe: I think that is speculative at this point, and I do not know that I could answer that. I can say certainly that if there were requests coming from different areas of the workplace with regard to application of The Essential Services Act and they came to the Ministry of Labour, I would respond as Minister of Labour. Should I be the incumbent at that point in time, I certainly would be responsive to those requests. How I would respond, of course, I cannot say. I think that is more of an ad hoc response. You know, if it came in through Labour, came in through Agriculture, came in through wherever, there is certainly communication and co-operation within the various departments as well.

Mr. Reid: Has the Department of Labour and perhaps the minister through his other discussions with his colleagues—maybe I should

be general in asking this question—had any discussions with the City of Winnipeg with respect to what was their announced intention to consider the lockout provisions for the paramedics? I know mediation is ongoing and I hope it is successful and the department is involved in that. Perhaps the minister can indicate whether or not the department has had any discussions, or the government has had any discussions, with the City of Winnipeg with respect to lockout after they have requested essential services inclusion.

Mr. Radcliffe: I can only respond on my own behalf at this point in time that I have had no conversations at all with any magistrate or any official at the City of Winnipeg with regard to lockout. In fact, quite interestingly, the initial contact I had with the paramedics was that I was returning to my office after Question Period one day and I saw two individuals in the back hall of the building, on the main floor, and questioned what they were looking for as they appeared to be lost.

They introduced themselves as Mr. Fotti and Mr. MacLean, and they said they were looking for Room 156. I said, well, follow me and I will direct you. I said what do you want; they said they wanted to speak to Radcliffe. I said, well, you found him; what do you want? They said they had come to the Legislature to talk about their labour difficulties and to try and find a solution. So I said step right in, sit down. I poured them each a Coke, and I said I will be glad to talk to you, what is your issue.

They then explained to me the progress that they had effected at that point in time on their labour negotiations with the city. They outlined very briefly the different aspects as they saw it, the different issues as they saw it, in their negotiations and the experience they had had. At that point then I called in the deputy and we shared this information.

Very shortly thereafter, I was able to appoint a mediator to assist with the ongoing issues. I make it a practice not to become involved or make any comment on the particular substance of any particular struggle but rather to be the resource to try and effect a solution.

Mr. Reid: I understand that the department would want to find a solution to the impasse. Has any member of the City of Winnipeg council or the administration from the City of Winnipeg or representatives from the employer side contacted the Department of Labour or the minister directly to consult with respect to the options available to find a solution to the impasse that is currently being mediated?

Mr. Radcliffe: I am pleased to tell my honourable colleague that in fact no conversation of any particular substance has occurred between the department, the minister nor the deputy minister, with regard to this collective agreement other than a conversation with the human resources person at the city to ensure that the city would be a willing participant in the mediation process.

Having said that, we certainly heard from the two union leaders as to how they perceived the whole issue, but there has been no consultation of any substance at all between the department nor between the minister and the city with regard to their goals or ambitions or directions on this at all. The only thing was, Mr. Chairman, was of a procedural conversation. Now, during the procedural conversation—I was not party to that conversation—I am sure there were lots of things talked about, but we have no advice from the city as to what their position is.

Mr. Reid: So then would the minister or the department be aware of the City of Winnipeg's reasons for not wanting to go the route of binding arbitration?

Mr. Radcliffe: No.

* (1700)

Mr. Reid: I guess, then, we will have to wait for the outcome of the mediation process. Can the minister tell me what the deadline is that he or the department has indicated to the mediator with respect to a report back with regard to the paramedics and the City of Winnipeg negotiations?

Mr. Radcliffe: June 16 for the return date on the mediation report from Mr. Paul Teskey.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Reid: I take it that the mediation has just commenced this week. Is that correct, or is it due to start next week?

Mr. Radcliffe: I believe my honourable colleague is correct that in fact it is starting this week, and I believe tomorrow is the first day of meetings with the parties. The mediator had been busy with other issues and has now got some time to address this issue.

Mr. Reid: Then we will wait to see what the outcome of that mediation process is, and I hope that it is successful. I am sure the department and the general public do as well. We will keep our fingers crossed.

I am switching focus here. I want to ask if you have, because this, I believe, is the overall general policy direction of the department, information relating to—maybe I should ask the question first with respect to your statistical information that you have within the department with respect to employment and wage rates, et cetera. Do you get that information from—is it Stats Manitoba, or do you get that from Statistics Canada? Can you perhaps give an indication where you would get your information from?

Mr. Radcliffe: Our source of information is Statistics Manitoba. They have an on-line service. We believe that a lot of their information is derived from Stats Canada, and then a number of collective agreements are filed with the department. So we on request will supply that information to employers or to labour individuals, labour unions.

Mr. Reid: Can you tell me what the average wage rate is for the province of Manitoba? Do you keep that information or have it here available with you?

Mr. Radcliffe: When you say the average wage rate, is it for any particular industry or something as a norm across the province?

Mr. Reid: Perhaps if you have the general across-the-province average wage rate. I do not if you keep this information with respect to breakdown by sectors of the economy, whether

it is manufacturing or service sector, et cetera. Do you have that breakdown? I am not sure if you have it in a list form, but if you do, I would appreciate receiving a copy of that.

Mr. Radcliffe: We do not have that here today, but we would be pleased to give it to my honourable colleague on Monday, and that would be the wage rates generally across the province and then divided down by sectors.

Mr. Reid: Then can you give me an indication, as well as that information, of the jobs in the province, and I do not know if you have it broken down by sector or not, but full-time and part-time employment in those categories?

Mr. Radcliffe: I certainly can do that as well.

Mr. Reid: I look forward to receiving that information from the minister, and I will ask more questions when that information becomes available, and, if possible, Mr. Chair, reserve the right to go back once that information is received.

Oh, with one last question with respect to vacation relief that is shown in the Estimates book under Executive Support, can you tell me: is that for the purpose of bringing in staff to replace others that have gone on vacation? Is that the purpose of the funds that are in place there?

Mr. Radcliffe: Yes, I am told it is for the normal vacation relief when regular staff are taking their summer holidays and there is a need for someone to fill that position.

Mr. Reid: It was not a very well-worded question on my part there: is it for vacation relief? It just dawned on me after I asked it. But it does not seem like a very large amount of money, so, I mean, who are we replacing here? What is the scale? I guess we do not replace the deputy minister or the senior staff because that amount of money would not cover very much time, so who gets replaced with this vacation relief money?

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chairman, I want to assure my honourable colleague that the deputy minister is irreplaceable and that no amount of

money could replace the skill and wisdom and charm that the deputy minister brings to this task.

This sum is a nominal sum to represent, I believe, two weeks pay for somebody on a term at the admin secretary level, so it is a very nominal level, and it is just a nominal allocation.

* (1710)

Mr. Chairperson: 11.1. Labour Executive (b) Executive Support (1) Salary and Employee Benefits \$409,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$69,700—pass.

11.2. Labour Programs (a) Management Services \$1,074,300.

Mr. Reid: I just want to ask a few general questions in this area as well, and perhaps the former Deputy Premier can assist the minister on this, too, because I know he is perhaps assisting with some of the development of this. In the throne speech that I have a copy of here, it referenced that the government was making plans to reduce the size of government without laying off any government workers, it says.

I would like to know what the plan is because you are talking about a 10 percent reduction and what the impact is going to be on the Department of Labour of any, so I am not talking about other departments. I am only going to be talking about the Department of Labour.

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chairman, I believe that these remarks contained in the throne speech were a forecast or a general administrative or management tool, recognizing the fact that our civil service is an aging group of individuals as are we all around this table, with the exception, of course, of my honourable colleagues, but that as individuals do choose retirement, the estimate of the reduction of the civil service would be that of 10 percent. There is nothing more specific than that targeted to the Department of Labour.

The level of service would be maintained by virtue of the improvement and advance of the ever-increasing search for technology that is being introduced with the various problems that

we have indicated and also that individuals would be gaining more training and achieving higher skills, and so therefore they would no longer be doing perhaps the nominal skills that they were but have more responsibility and mature to a higher level of pay. But this is just the general, I guess I would say, maturation of our workforce.

Mr. Reid: I do not have an overview of staffing in the department, and I am wondering, because the indication was that individuals who would be eligible for retirement, of course, would be the first preference. Where people would retire, you would not replace positions, I would imagine.

Is there an overview of the department with respect to the age levels and how many of those individuals would be approaching perhaps the earliest possible retirement age, which I think may be 55 in the civil service?

Mr. Radcliffe: I believe the throne speech spoke to government as an overall and broad stroke issue, but I am told that in the Department of Labour by 2001 there will be 18.7 percent of the individuals employed in the department who will be eligible for retirement, and this is information obtained from the Human Resource Council in 1998. I would further qualify my remarks by saying that these are individuals who qualify for retirement but may not necessarily choose it. I think my honourable colleague is correct, that 55 is the—[interjection] There you go. They may choose to keep on working and be gainfully employed, or they may choose to start a second career. That is the overall information that we have.

Mr. Reid: When the minister indicates 18.7 percent, that is just strictly the Department of Labour staff that will be in a position to potentially retire by the year 2001. Is there a plan that you have in place should people opt to retire at that point? Are you looking at any particular functions within the Department of Labour of perhaps phasing them out from your normal process now? Because if you are not going to replace those jobs, then you are going to have to have some consolidation of your services. I am trying to get an understanding here of what it is that the department is looking

at now and what services will be consolidated or eliminated.

Ms. Radcliffe: The administration and the department has no specific targeted plan at this point in time. Obviously, one has to be guided by the exigencies of the particular individual situations or personal situations in which people find themselves. So one has to be flexible and reactive at a time when an employee would be proposing to come to administration and say, I am giving you my notice, I want to retire, I will give you six months to find my replacement or whatever permutation accommodation that might be.

The administration is looking at it from a general perspective—this is a matter of concern—starting down the road of thinking about it, of improving people's skill sets in areas where there might be a potential for people to retire. I cannot say at this point in time that there are any departments or any subsections of the department that are targeted, that will be collapsed or changed. We cannot anticipate any individuals retiring right now.

Mr. Reid: So then if I understand the minister's answer correctly then, it will be done on an ad hoc basis as individuals elect to retire. You will move or shift the department functions based on where vacancies will exist or on your ability to shift people around within the department, so that you will be able to shrink the department. You will make those decisions somewhere down the road on what areas of service you are no longer going to provide or you are going to downgrade. Is my understanding correct?

Mr. Radcliffe: I do not believe we are anticipating any downgrading of service level. Service level will be at a consistent high quality and high level, and we will spend whatever monies are required in order to maintain a quality of service to the public of Manitoba. I do not believe that the sole criteria of retirement will drive administrative changes within the department. Certainly it is not anticipated that there is going to be any wholesale dismissal of employees and that the issue is as people retire that will trigger administrative changes. Once you embark on administrative change, there are obviously efficiencies that will suggest

themselves to the administration which could be initiated.

I cannot promise my honourable colleague specifically that changes will be restricted only to retirements, because retirements then give rise to further sensible and administrative efficiencies. As technology increases and as people's skill set increase, as people are retrained for different areas or if in fact some area should become obsolete in the future, then staffing changes would be implemented as well. That I cannot forecast at this point in time.

Mr. Reid: Are there any functions or any staff positions within the Department of Labour that are underutilized at this point in time?

Mr. Radcliffe: Save except for the minister, are you saying? I do not believe at this point in time I have any personal knowledge of any underemployed individuals within the department, but I just wanted to give my honourable colleague an illustration of what—[laughter] Oops. I believe we have several candidates in the room that are volunteering for this. I just wanted to give my honourable colleague an indication or an illustration of what some of the technology and skill set improvements are that we are anticipating. For example, we have a number of inspectors or officer inspectors in the Workplace Safety and Health and in Employment Standards area. Right now, and this is really getting down to the minutiae of departmental management, their custom is that they report for work at their appointed hours, they travel physically from their homes to their workplace, they receive their briefing and their assignments for the day, and then they disperse out to do their assignments.

What we are anticipating being able to do is to equip all those individuals with laptop computers. They then will be able to be electronically assigned work at the discretion and choice of management so that they then can leave their home at their appointed time and travel directly to their assignments. That cuts out the necessity of having to come in to the office and then travel out of the office to the workplace. They then can communicate from their laptop back to the office when their information has been collated and collected. So

these are some of the skill sets that would be improved. This would be something that we would look to from the Better Systems initiative that Labour has taken a lead in. This would lead to greater efficiencies and actually, in a way, superior service because you would be able to cover more ground in a particular day.

* (1720)

Mr. Reid: So then, if I understand the minister's comments that by far the vast majority of the province are not underutilized and, in fact, are utilized up to their potential. Is that what the minister is saying?

Mr. Radcliffe: I mean, we could get into a philosophical conversation there that I think everybody always has untapped potential and that any individual, given a challenge, can rise to a greater height of production or performance. I think that the way things are configured in the department right now, there is nobody who is redundant. However, with administrative changes and advances in technology and advances in learning, there may be functions that may be changed in the future, and I cannot say anything more general than that, and that is more on a conceptual basis. So I cannot say categorically to my honourable colleague at this point in time that everybody in the department is working to full capacity, because I happen to be one of those individuals that thinks you always can perform more if more is demanded of you, but is everybody well—I am sorry? [interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

Mr. Radcliffe: But I believe that the department is functioning on a very productive and harmonious basis at this point in time.

Mr. Reid: So then I take it from what the minister is saying that people can rise to the challenge. Yes, that is true, but if we look at our Japanese colleagues, their workforce, one only has to read the horror stories coming out of that country about people that are overutilized and kept more tasks pushed at them. Now I do not know the inner workings of the department. I mean, the senior staff and the people that do those jobs would know best, at least from my

point of view from this time. I guess, if they are not by large part underutilized and there is going to be no downgrading of service, there is going to be increased workload for everybody that is going to be remaining in the department for those that do not retire, so I guess the handwriting is on the wall in that regard.

Now, can you tell me, the people that are going to be, or potentially retiring, that 18.7 percent that you talked about, is that going to be coming from one specific area? Is there like a block of people in certain parts of the department that are going to be affected, or potentially affected as a result, or is this generally spread over the wider function of the whole and entire department?

Mr. Radcliffe: Well, first of all, I would respond to the analysis or conclusion that my honourable colleague put on the record that by virtue of efficiencies or improvements in service or improvements in training and education and skill, this would necessarily result in an added burden or a more onerous responsibility being laid on the shoulders of the employees.

This is not, in fact, the philosophy or function or purpose of the department or any of the administration in the department. In fact, the department will be a fair and honourable place to work, as it is now, and that people would not be abused. So I do not want to leave on the record any misapprehension on the part of my honourable colleague that that would happen.

The statistic that I gave my honourable friend at 18.7 percent is a general figure, and any reductions would be spread across the department. There is no one specific area or place at this point that is under consideration or being targeted. The phrases or the comments in the throne speech are of a general nature because of the nature of our civil service which has been a reasonably static employment group. It is an aging group at this point in time, so this is something that applies generally to all of us.

Mr. Reid: I do not know if I asked this question or not with respect to the department age, to get an average age for your department. Do you have that indication here today?

Mr. Radcliffe: We do not have it here. No, my honourable colleague has not asked that question. We do not have that information here. We can certainly undertake to look and see if we have access to that information, and if we have it, we can undertake to produce it.

Mr. Reid: Okay, then I will look forward to that information coming forward when the department is able to gather it. The minister has indicated perhaps on Monday, I think he said, it would be available with respect to the departmental statistics. If not, the minister can advise me otherwise of that.

When we went to the desktop initiative, and I know we asked a number of questions on that last year and in the minister's opening comments, he talked about I think it was \$320,400 with respect to capital. I think that involved perhaps the desktop computer initiative. Is that your overall cost of implementation of that program for the entire department? Is that the full capital cost?

Mr. Radcliffe: The \$320,400 represents the amortization of capital costs across the department for desktop. Yes, for desktop.

Mr. Reid: So that is the amortized costs. What is the real cost then of that particular project for the department?

Mr. Radcliffe: The operating cost on an annual basis is approximately \$450,000 a year.

Mr. Reid: That is your operating costs, \$450,000 per year, the individual department's. When you say amortized, over what period of time is this amortized?

Mr. Radcliffe: Four years.

Mr. Reid: How many systems were involved?

Mr. Radcliffe: 202 systems.

Mr. Reid: The department, from time to time, because these are, I think what we would reference as dedicated systems made by IBM, proprietary boxes or containers that they are in. Can you tell me, do you do any requirements to do upgrades to any of those pieces of equipment

that you would have in your department? Do you get requests from staff, for example, to install a CD-ROM? Because I know the department through Workplace Safety and Health, for example, have produced a ROM disk that is available, and you talked about the deputy minister being involved. There is a ROM with respect to his function, and other staff must have similar needs for that. If those pieces of equipment came minus that CD-ROM, for example, that drive, is it possible for the staff to upgrade that? If so, what would be the cost associated with that particular upgrade?

* (1730)

Mr. Radcliffe: I am told that the greater part of the equipment that is in the department, in fact, anticipates issues like the CD-ROM. However, if there were situations that arise from time to time where staff felt that they had a legitimate request or legitimate grounds for a request and advanced that request, it would be evaluated. If there were merit to the request that it, in fact, performed a useful, departmental function that was to the benefit of the department, that would be addressed and granted. So upgrades are possible.

Mr. Reid: Then can you tell me, are there provisions in the contract with the service provider? I think it is Systemhouse who is providing the service for the government on the desktop initiative. What provisions are in place? Does Systemhouse come in and do those upgrades for that equipment? Is there a charge associated with that particular service in addition to the component that they may bring in to upgrade that system?

Mr. Radcliffe: Yes, I am told Systemhouse charges a flat rate of \$128 a call, and that covers either a move, an addition to a particular piece of equipment, or an upgrade. So that would be the service cost which would then be added to whatever it was that was being purchased.

Mr. Reid: Can you tell me what that service cost would be? Do you have that information available?

Mr. Radcliffe: I think I just said it was \$128, which is a flat rate.

Mr. Reid: Okay. Sorry, I missed that.

Mr. Radcliffe: So it is \$128, which is a flat rate for a move of equipment, add-on of equipment, or an upgrade.

Mr. Reid: I have heard this, and I am going to ask this right out, and I have heard this from other government areas. I use the example of the CD-ROM that I started with here. To upgrade a CD-ROM into a computer, you can go to a store and buy one for \$80. I have been told that, for a government to do this through the Systemhouse contract, it is going to cost upwards of \$800 to replace that, including the service charge.

So I am trying to get an understanding here of what changes are involved, what the costs are going to be to the department. Should you have a piece of equipment come in minus or you want to upgrade the hard drive, for example, because you are holding a larger database as you do in many of your functions of your department, I am trying to get an idea here of not only the service charge that is involved but what the charge is going to be. Are you just going to pay a retail price for the component, or is there going to be a special price as a result of the contract that has been signed?

Mr. Radcliffe: I am astounded at that information, and I certainly, for my own benefit, will try and find that out as well. But, for the purposes of this examination today, I am advised that this more properly is a question that falls in the realm of Department of Government Services.

Mr. Reid: Well, then, perhaps I will attempt to go into Government Services Estimates and ask that from the minister there. I just do not want to see the department get caught in situations like this, because it can quickly deplete your resources if you have to make any additions or amendments to your hardware equipment that you are using within the department.

If that is the case of the contract that the government has signed, I think it is not in the best interests of the department and, of course, the taxpayer who has to foot the bill, ultimately, for those charges.

I want to ask a question going back—I forgot to ask this question when we were dealing with the surveys—to find out if there are any other surveys with respect to the functions of the Department of Labour. Do you have any projects ongoing or any other surveys that are being undertaken or contemplated at this time?

Mr. Radcliffe: There are no organized surveys or preconceived or predesigned surveys that are being conducted at this point in time in the Department of Labour. However, Workplace Safety and Health, I am told, will, from time to time, on an ad-hoc basis, as the circumstances dictate, do a casual survey of workers in the marketplace where they think it is appropriate for their own individual purposes. But there is nothing organized or concerted at this point in time.

Mr. Reid: I am going back to the cost of the computers here for a minute, because it comes out of your budget costs, no doubt, for which you have to be accountable. We all have to be accountable. If you look at the amortized cost of \$320,400 over four years, it works out to just about \$1.3 million. I am trying to get a picture here. I mean, I have a rough idea of what computer systems are worth. If you take those 202 systems that you have within your department, even at \$2,000, which would be around an average, a little over \$2,000 for an average computer system.

Now, I am not sure if you are running Cadillac models in the department or not. I would not expect that would be the case in all functions, but even at \$2,000 a piece, we are at \$400,000, so I am trying to get an idea here. You have a healthy difference between that. If that is the case, we are at about three times that, so you are about \$6,000 per computer system that you are paying through your amortized costs. So I am trying to get an idea here of what is realistic. I have never bought a computer system that was \$6,000 yet.

* (1740)

Mr. Radcliffe: I am told there are a number of laptop computers that individuals in the department have, and I referenced those a few minutes ago. Our best knowledge at this point in

time is that those run between \$3,500 and \$4,000 a piece. These are high quality upend upscale machines. The desktop machines probably run \$3,000 to \$3,500 a piece, and the reason why high quality high-end machines were purchased was that under the Better Systems initiative we are networking right across government, and so you need a quality machine that will be able to accept the capacity or be able to accommodate a demand for the networking capacity.

Then servers are an additional charge as well in the local area networks within the department. The machines that we have got right now, I gather, on the desktops and laptops are what they call Class 1 machines, which is a grade of machine. The requirement, as I say, for Class 1 is because of the network capacity. We have just gone to a SAP method of payroll and accounting, which is mooted to be an improvement on our—

An Honourable Member: We will see.

Mr. Radcliffe: Yes, exactly—on our ability to communicate and perform and function and so the SAP demanded high-end machines as well, so this gives you an idea that in fact we are not looking at \$2,000 machines. That would be fine and perfectly adequate for somebody to have a personal database, and say, have a spreadsheet with your personal investments on them or letter writing function or the storing of limited personal data, but in a department such as government departments you require machines of a higher quality, a higher nature.

So that is why the numbers are running the level they are, and I am sure you are talking to somebody who is barely literate in computerese. I can do my own word processing and that is it. So I am not somebody who professes a great deal of technology or skill with regard to doing networking or any of that nature.

I can tell my honourable colleague that I suffered through a network in my law firm once, and I rued the day that I ever let the guy in the door, because it was an aberration.

It is something that I am struggling with, somebody at my age. Now, my children take this in stride and—

An Honourable Member: Hire a teenager. He will pick it up.

Mr. Radcliffe: Exactly. That is what we have got to do, is hire a teenager to turn on the television.

Mr. Reid: I mean the costs seem to be way out of whack for me and even high-end Class 1 machines, as you referenced them, I am not sure if the entire department has Class 1 systems. I am sure your administrative function that does mostly word processing would not have Class 1 machines. It would be a machine that would be structured or set up for that particular purpose, so I still think the cost is exorbitant at \$1.3 million over that four-year span. What happens with the equipment at the end of that four years? Does it remain a property of the government or is it ownership by SHL?

Mr. Radcliffe: I believe one of the salient issues in this contract is that the machinery remains the property of SHL, is turned back to SHL, and they replace it with upgraded machinery at that point in time.

Mr. Reid: Will there be a new amortized cost when that equipment is replaced?

Mr. Radcliffe: I think I would have to defer to Mr. Ruberg and the desktop people at this point in time, because I do not have that information.

Mr. Reid: Okay. I recognize that Government Services would probably be able to provide the details on that. The cost recovery of the department the minister referenced was—I think he said it was going to be anticipated to be 61 percent for this current budget year that we are entering. What was the cost recovery for the past year? I know the annual report that we have is for '97-98, but I am wondering if you have the information here with respect to '98-99.

Mr. Radcliffe: I am told that that percentage is pretty consistent year over year of 61, 62 percent and that it would be in that nature for '98-99 as well.

Mr. Reid: Do you have a list that is available, showing the areas where you get your cost recovery revenues from?

Mr. Radcliffe: Apparently this information comes out of the Department of Finance. We supply them our inputs, and we then get a copy of the report on it. We certainly would be happy to supply that to my honourable colleague when we receive it.

Mr. Reid: Have you reduced the workload in the Labour/Management Services Division?

Mr. Radcliffe: I am told that a voucher processing clerk position was eliminated. The reason that position was eliminated was because of the advent of SAP, and the individual was retrained and retooled and went on as an Employment Standards officer.

* (1750)

Mr. Reid: So the individual then was not laid off or without a job, and we did not eliminate a position as a result of someone taking retirement, for example; so is still deployed elsewhere within the department then.

Mr. Radcliffe: Correct.

Mr. Reid: I think this is still part of the research and policy section as well. The minister's department had a report that came back from the minimum wage advisory board late last year. Of course, the government made an announcement, the ministry made an announcement, with respect to the changes to the minimum wage in the province.

There were other recommendations that were a part of the minimum wage report that came forward dealing with several other issues. Unfortunately, I did not bring the copy of that report here with me because I know I had asked the department for a copy of it and they would not release it. I am not sure why you would not release it, but it nevertheless somehow turned up and we were able to see some of the recommendations that were in there.

One of the recommendations referenced the fact that we needed to look at a long-term process that would allow for an orderly change in the way the minimum wage is adjusted in the province. That was part of the recommendations that were in there. I believe that came from the

chairperson, the government's appointed chairperson to that board as well. I am wondering what consideration has been given to having the minimum wage adjusted in an orderly fashion.

Even the business community has called for that because they do not like to see larger adjustments in the minimum wage which creates compounded hardship for them, and, no doubt, it affects the bottom line. Wage costs, labour costs, always do, and there is some concern about larger amounts going up, so if there is a process that was in place to adjust that on a more uniform basis, an annual or a biannual process, that that would take place.

Is any consideration being given in the department to amending the minimum wage act to allow for that process to occur?

Mr. Radcliffe: I think that really what we are embarking on here right now is a whole discussion and a philosophical treatment of how to maintain inflation in the economy, and how to keep various aspects of the employment sectors balanced so that no one group really gets significantly out of balance with another, given that there is always stimulation from the organized labour side for ever-increasing collective agreement settlements. We can only look right now at the fact that the yardstick or the threshold's improvement in wages right now seems to have been 2, 2 and 2 over a three-year period, with a little bit of extra thrown in, extras for benefits in the workplace environment. Then you have other groups that take a surge up if they are coming off the wage freezes.

So government at this point is being very cautious at building in any automatic multipliers or increase in the minimum wage or any other aspect of wage treatment because the government feels that, if you marry yourself or bind yourself to an automatic process, then you can create a system that gets out of control and you lose the ability to address the matter and apply your discretion on the issue of the moment.

I can give my honourable colleague an example of my last stop when I was in Consumer and Corporate Affairs, and part of

my task used to be, on an annual basis, to assist in setting the minimum rise or the unproven rise in rents, the allowable rise in rents, that landlords were able to set in a given year. You can have inflationary costs that lead landlords to demand that they should get something far in excess of the 1 percent, but you can look to this government's progress that it has been 1 percent, 1 percent, 1 percent, 1 percent over a number of years. That has been significantly on the basis that you want to curb inflation.

If you are not paying your civil service, or if you are asking your civil service to take a reduction in pay or a freeze in pay, and if you are asking large elements of the community to take a freeze in pay because costs have got out of hand or debt has got out of hand and you have to take economic readjustments, then if you marry yourself or commit yourself to an automatic multiplier or incremental process for your minimum wage, then you take that out of the discretion of the individuals at that point in time who have their hands on the wheel. So a long-winded way of saying there is no intention at this point in time of committing ourselves to an automatic process of improving the wage.

It is certainly something that I personally intend to keep an eye on and would make recommendations to my colleagues from time to time over the next number of years. So, as we move through the next mandate, it would be something I would bring back to the cabinet table for a suggestion, but I would not want to be handcuffed to an automatic process.

Mr. Reid: So, from what you said then, you see an adjustment to the minimum wage of this province, I think, three times in was it 11 or 12 years as a fair and reasonable expectation or process that the people of Manitoba that are living and working at minimum wage should expect from your government?

Mr. Radcliffe: I am very cautious to respond either affirmatively or negatively to a categorical remark such as my honourable colleague has presented without qualifying it by saying that what is fair and reasonable has to be taken in context to the economics of the time and of what will be the impact of a rise of the minimum wage. When there is a rise in the minimum

wage, there is a shadow effect as well that echoes right through industry.

I am sure my honourable colleague is aware that there are a number of employment areas which lever themselves that they may pay 50 cents over minimum or they may pay a set amount over the minimum wage. So, when one raises the minimum wage, not only do you impact the workers that are earning at that level, but you are impacting on a whole myriad of other folk. It has a domino effect right through the workplace, so you have to take into account the strength of the economy at the time you are addressing it. I think the percentage rise that we did effect acknowledges and recognizes the fact that it was very timely and, perhaps, even out of time to address this issue. That is why we did it with such a significant rise.

You have to also take into account, I think, the relative economies of Saskatchewan and Ontario, our neighbours, and the market pools of labour that we are competing with and where they are at. So to say three rises in 11 years, is that fair? On the face of the question, it looks like it could be unreasonable, but I think you have to build in all the aspects of the labour market. Who is impacted by it? What is the ability of employers to pay? What will be the effect on the minimum-wage employers? Will they say if the economy is not robust, then the impact will be, if the minimum wage goes up, that they will reduce the number of minimum-wage employees they have because they cannot afford to pay an expanded rise if they are not receiving the revenues that would be commensurate to meet that sort of a burden?

So it is an interconnected issue, and you have to strike a very fine balance, not only with the people in your own province, but the other groups around you with whom you are competing for that market pool. So I would say probably in reflection, given the exigencies of what we had to suffer in Manitoba in getting a handle on the offloading and the balancing on health care costs, the education costs, the diminution of the CHST transfers, the rises in cost of technology and drugs, all the other things that government was having to address that it probably was, in the overall grand scheme; yes, it was fair.

Mr. Reid: I look at it from a different point of view. I know our time is growing short here. Six dollars an hour, if you work a 40-hour week, I think will pay \$12,480 a year. Now, I am not sure which one of us in this room, any one of us, that can live on \$12,480 a year. I know I could not do it. I have sat down at the table and I have figured out what it cost to rent a single bedroom or bachelor apartment, the cost of food and clothing and transportation, et cetera. I do not think that even comes close to covering the costs for people that have to live on that, and that is why they have to work at two jobs or have every member of the family that is eligible work at different jobs.

The argument that you used about the impact about they are going to have to cut people, well, I do not know of a business yet that keeps excess people around and is going to have to eliminate them if the minimum wage goes up. So that argument is, I think, not without any significant substance.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour now being 6 p.m., committee rise.

ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Environment. Does the honourable Minister of Environment have an opening statement?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): Indeed, I do, Mr. Chairman. I would like to make a statement before the Estimates begin.

I am very pleased to be in the 1999-2000 Estimates, and I hope that the members have had the opportunity to review the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, the document that was prepared for the department.

Before proceeding with an overview of the department's activities for the '99-2000 year, I would like to acknowledge the dedicated effort of all departmental staff who worked towards fulfilling the department's mandate. We really do have a very capable and outstanding staff. I

have been impressed with their knowledge and expertise and their scientific backgrounds.

The vision of the department, and we do have a vision that I think is important to put on the record, is to ensure a high level of environmental quality for present and future generations of Manitobans. The department continues to pursue a number of specific strategies contributing to the fulfilment of this vision.

These include the implementation of the federal-provincial harmonization agreement, through the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, commonly called CCME; building partnerships with local governments, provincial departments, industry and so forth, focusing on regional solutions, particularly for solid waste; developing innovative approaches to compliance and enforcement; working with partners to prevent pollution before it occurs—I think that is important, because prevention is an emphasis that needs to be made as well as addressing pollution after it occurs; reducing waste with continued emphasis this year on implementation of the province's used oil initiative; placing greater reliance on targets, objectives and standards rather than prescribing specific technologies or approaches; extending resources through involvement of others, using delegation and empowerment, we believe that is a very important facet; using financial instruments and licences in orders to ensure clients' respect to comply with and practise environmental stewardship; striving to provide quality service to all departmental clients; ensuring that the expanding livestock industry is sustainable through the implementation of our revised Livestock Manure and Mortalities Management Regulation.

As well, we have a continuous improvement initiative. That is the department's continuous improvement vision to deliver the highest quality of service to achieve the best value for tax dollars. In that regard, the department has surveyed clients and employers for their input respecting departmental operations and programs and to identify improvement opportunities. Generally clients have confirmed the importance of the department's programs, and the department continues to work towards

improving delivery at a reasonable cost. As well, we emphasize in our vision training as a normal course of business, we will continue our commitment to training and development of staff to ensure that they are knowledgeable, well trained, and can effectively deliver the requirements of their positions. Ongoing training of staff includes, but is not limited to, enforcement and compliance training, conflict resolution training, emergency response training, Manitoba Environment training seminars, and various other technical and management training opportunities.

We have performance measures in place that we work under the Manitoba measures initiative. We work at improving the planning process to develop a business plan that clearly reflects priority areas, and staff have done extensive work in outlining key departmental goals and objectives. Work plans are being linked more closely with the departmental business plan, and performance measures are being developed to assist in determining whether the department is achieving its goals and objectives.

As in past years, the department continues to recognize the activities of staff, and we will again this year be holding recognition days to formally recognize exceptional employee organizational performance during a combined presentation with Environment Canada and the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. Environment departments' co-location, an interesting thing in terms of co-operation, is that for the past two years, the Environment Canada offices and the Manitoba Environment offices have been co-located.

We are just down the street at the corner of Broadway and Main, and that working together has led to increased co-operation with Environment Canada and an ability to identify opportunities to optimize the co-location initiative. We are working with CCME in that regard as well. It enables a number of specific program areas to be explored more easily to reduce costs and foster co-operation, and with the signing of the Canada-Manitoba accord on environmental harmonization, additional program activities will be identified, and we like that ability to increase efficiency by reducing costs and duplication and overlap.

In terms of regulatory review, the department will continue in the upcoming year to actively review and amend many of its existing regulations to make sure that they are current, to make sure that they are in conformity with the criteria set out by the regulatory review committee. That is an opportunity, of course, to ensure that we discard obsolete regulations and that we make sure that the regulations we have are compatible with the department's goals of protecting human health and the environment.

Any significant amendments make their way through this process and will continue to involve stakeholder and general public consultation. This is a very open, transparent and inclusive department.

We have some legislation regulations to be addressed in the '99-2000 year. We will be reviewing The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act in the year. A formal review will be done. This act has served well since it was enacted back in 1984, but there have been changes in the field in past years, and the department is addressing them. That act, of course, coming in under the New Democrats, has served well, and, as changes have evolved in the field, we will look to see upgrading it to reflect those evolutionary features.

There will be opportunities for major revision if they are considered necessary. Some changes will follow leads carried out by the federal government because there is national linkage, particularly in hazardous waste management, as we look towards trying to ensure a national standard. Some of the issues that will be under consideration would include possibly looking at how much more emphasis should be placed on pollution prevention.

We know that is an area that we need to look at in terms of a preventative measure. What kind of greater emphasis needs to be placed? Should more encouragement be given to onsite disposal and hazardous waste recycling? Should some less hazardous waste, such as used oil, used batteries, used asbestos, et cetera, be given different treatment under the act, and if they should, what rules should apply? How do we encourage continued recycling or increased recycling of household hazardous waste? How

do we address medical waste? So we have a number of questions that we have been working on. Some are new areas, and we want to ensure the review is thorough, so we will be seeking stakeholder input as we go through. The public is most helpful in coming forward to offer opinions in these kinds of regards.

* (1440)

As well, we are looking at a waste disposal ground regulation. The department will continue the review of the waste disposal ground regulation. It was, under The Environment Act, registered in July '91, and was initiated as a result of concerns expressed by municipalities on the site classification system. We have a number of things we are going to be doing there.

A regional waste management task force was established in '98-99, for a comprehensive review of the provincial waste management situation. That will be reporting in the fall of '99. The task force has representation from major stakeholders as well as regulating agencies. The Association of Manitoba Municipalities is a major participant in this.

Livestock waste regulation. Manitoba's agricultural industry is becoming more diversified, and part of that diversification is the continued expansion of the livestock industry. We need to ensure that, as the industry grows, it does so in a sustainable fashion. Manitoba Environment's livestock management program was fully implemented in '98-99, and following support from Treasury Board, there are six new positions to assist the department in this expanded initiative. Amendments to the environmental legislation were passed on April 1, '98, and a concerted effort has been launched to ensure environmental protection from these operations across the province.

We recognize the sustainable growth of livestock industry means being sensitive to the environment, and that is what these new regulations and expanded program initiatives are designed to do. The goal is to ensure that we are leaving the environment in the same shape or in better shape for our children. As we move forward, we will continue working towards that goal.

Private sewage disposal systems regulation is the fourth point, and increased rural residential development brings with it associated problems such as sewage disposal. Large homes with modern conveniences are handled by septic tanks and fields, which traditionally were designed for a more simple lifestyle. We find that in areas with clay soils, such as the Winnipeg-Selkirk corridor, that we are looking to make sure that we have safe sewage. As well, we find places, Headingley being a good example, where you have a village that is some 200 years old, older than the city, and finding itself now with sewage seeping in its land. Environmentally, then, it is required that you have safe sewage for residents of that village. Some of them objected because since Headingley was incorporated, the city of Winnipeg was put up next door, and they are saying that Headingley should not have clean environmental—that they should be kept at risk because the city of Winnipeg was built next door to it. I think that is wrong. We must ensure that we have good sewage disposal where it is needed to keep people safe.

We have storage and handling of petroleum products. We will be looking, as well, at activities in that regard toward the development of a new regulation, and The Ozone Depleting Substances Act which I have already spoken to in the House. Administrative Monetary Penalties, which we call AMPs, we will further explore that possibility, implementing an AMPs process.

I have some fairly detailed notes, but I am just going to touch on the highlights of them in the interest of getting into the questioning, and I may come back later and spend some more detail on some of these points.

Sustainable development, I think today in an earlier speech in the House that I outlined what the points under sustainable development were and why we feel they are important. They are the underlying concept for all that we do in government. Premier Filmon, having read the Brundtland report at the time it came out, became an immediate fan. His background in engineering, of course, and his understanding of ground water, et cetera, probably made that report very appealing to him. [interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable minister, to complete her remarks.

Mrs. McIntosh: The member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) says it is repetitious, because I said this in the House this morning. Pardon me, then, I will not answer any questions that have been asked in the House. So better not ask any. I would not want to be repetitious, so if you ask any questions that have been asked in the House, I will indicate that the member for Burrows does not wish me to answer them. Given that, you have not asked very many, that should not pose too much of a problem.

But I just feel that it is important to stress that sustainable development is the hallmark of our government, brought in at the beginning of our tenure as government. Before it became trendy, before everybody jumped on board, this government was a leader in sustainable development, not just here, but worldwide.

I was pleased this morning to hear the opposition indicate support for sustainable development, because I had not heard that before. I had heard a lot of jeering and laughing about it as if it were funny. This morning I heard support, and I am very pleased about that change in attitude. I think it is important that that appreciation be noted, and I do not think it is part of the "me too" philosophy recently adopted by the NDP. I believe it is a sincere appreciation of what sustainable development is all about, and I am pleased about that.

Of course, Shoal Lake is another area. We continue to monitor the water quality there. Harmonization is an important factor, because Manitoba continues to be committed to effective environmental management in Canada, including the efficient use of the collective resources of all jurisdictions. We are continuing to take an active, in fact leadership role in continuing the negotiations to harmonize environmental management in Canada, an accord and three subagreements, inspections, Canada-wide standards and environmental assessment were signed in January of '98 by the CCME ministers, and there are two further subagreements related to enforcement. Monitoring and reporting are currently being negotiated. A specific implementation agreement is being negotiated

currently to activate the environmental assessment subagreement.

There is considerable work underway nationally to develop Canada-wide standards for pollutants of concern across the country. As the standards are completed, each government will undertake to achieve the standard in a specified time period, and we are looking forward to continuing work in that area.

We have the Canadian Environmental Protection Act review which is in line with our goals on harmonization. We are working with other provinces and the federal government to ensure there is an effective process in place for the control of toxic substances in Canada. I maybe will say more on that later. The North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, which is also known as the NAFTA environmental side agreement, Manitoba formally signed into this agreement in 1997, joining Quebec and Alberta as the first three provinces to do so. The department will continue to be an active participant in the many important trade and environment issues that need to be dealt with so we can ensure that Manitoba's interests and the interests of its people are advanced and protected.

Emergency response. The department received 434 calls this year through the emergency system involving 300 environmental accidents. I am very proud of their ability to respond and of the fact that people know now to call and seek that assistance. It is a very good indication that environmental concerns are going to be receiving and are receiving now priority attention.

* (1450)

Pollution prevention and waste minimization. Very vital part of today's world, one that the general public has come to understand as well. So there is a good partnership ability and good partnerships forming between the public and governments. This is a way that we intend to continue promoting waste reduction.

As a result of efforts initiated with the adoption of the province's Waste Reduction and

Prevention Act, we have made significant progress in reducing waste, and we will continue to work on even more.

National efforts to reduce waste, co-ordinated by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, have indeed resulted in achievement of a 50 percent reduction in packaging waste as a result of the National Packaging Protocol, and we have other statistics as well that are good news stories that are important for Canada. The survey indicated that by 1996, the Manitoba government had achieved a 16 percent reduction in overall solid waste. We still need to do more, of course, and are seeking to do more. That was by 1996. We are now at 1999, so we are looking to see what that figure will be as we arrive at the year 2000.

Much of the improvements in recycling activities are, in part, due to the good people of Manitoba who have opted in with moral and physical support and municipalities who have worked very hard. As a result, as of 1999, for example, virtually all used tires are being processed for recycling.

Over 95 percent of all Manitobans now have access to multimaterial recycling services. Over \$2 million annually is being spent on used tires and \$4.5 million in support payments for municipal recycling programs. Over 33,000 tonnes of recyclable materials are being recovered and made into new products locally and internationally, with over 18,000 tonnes of old newspapers recycled at Pine Falls. Over 30,000 trees were conserved that way. I will indicate that—[interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. If we want to carry on conversations, please do it at a lower tone.

The honourable minister, to continue her remarks.

An Honourable Member: Why do you not just table it?

Mrs. McIntosh: May I do that?

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): No, I prefer to listen to you.

Mrs. McIntosh: Okay. Thank you very much. I thank my critic for that, because I do want to put all this on the record, but I was concerned about taking too much time. So I appreciate that consideration. I thank him for it. I will try to move hastily, though, and not take too much time.

In February 1998, new business plans were prepared and submitted to the Minister of Environment by the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation and the Tire Stewardship Board. These plans were approved in principle, and requests for changes in levy structures have been deferred, pending consideration of regulatory amendments that will be required for more comprehensive approval. I am pleased to report this first experience with business plan renewals has gone very smoothly.

In '98, the department conducted extensive public consultation processes on the effectiveness of the Manitoba Product Stewardship regulation. Based on this review, the regulation was continued, and the objective for the new business plan is to explore the feasibility of broadening the funding base for recycling programs, as well as expansion of waste reduction activities in the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors.

In addition, we will be looking to have either higher rates of participation and the material recovery achieved than the current level of 40 percent of the designated materials being addressed by the program. We also have a stewardship program for the management of used oil filters and containers now launched in Manitoba. That was in 1997 that we put that regulation in place, Used Oil, Filters and Containers Stewardship Regulation, to require the establishment of industry-managed stewardship programs as a condition for selling these products in Manitoba.

The Manitoba Association for Resource Recovery Corporation was formed to carry out this obligation. It has a five-year business plan, which was approved early last year. The funding for that program comes directly from the industry-managed stewardship program, with no funds being submitted to the government. I am truly delighted to report that under the MARRC

business plan tremendous progress has been achieved in the first year of operation, surpassing the business plan projections.

We have 16 equal centres established in rural Manitoba to complement three collection facilities present in Winnipeg. We have 10.9 million litres of used oil collected, 21 percent above projections. We have one million used oil filters recycled, 43 percent above projections. We have 90,000 kilograms of used plastic oil containers recycled, 50 percent above projections. So we are certainly experiencing success there, and that is another success story I am pleased to report upon.

Other new initiatives that will be receiving particular attention from the department will include organic waste and composting, construction and demolition of waste, and household hazardous waste. The biggest shift in Manitoba's waste reduction strategy is the third strategy component, to reduce, on reducing waste at source—the first R of the three R hierarchy of waste reduction, which is reduce, reuse and recycle.

We want to work on reducing, and to accomplish this means working in close partnership directly with Manitoba businesses. We have had, since 1996, a very close co-operation with the Alliance of Manufacturers and Exporters Canada in the Manitoba division. Under a memorandum of understanding committed to raising awareness and developing methods to improve environmental performance and competitiveness, information material, success stories and procedures for conducting pollution-prevention audits have been prepared and a progress report on this project has just been completed.

As a result of these efforts, the Technical Assistance for Pollution Prevention office was established by the Alliance of Manufacturers and Exporters Canada in 1998. This partnership with my department and Environment Canada will focus its assistance to small- and medium-size enterprises, where indeed an opportunity is highest.

I am pleased to report that results are beginning to occur in the printing sector, which

is the first area being targeted by this project, with a demonstration of pollution-prevention practices by Manitoba's printing industry. I am optimistic that the encouragement of voluntary initiatives to prevent pollution will be a very effective complement to my department's existing compliance and enforcement programs.

Mr. Chairman, we talked about regional based management this morning with the Capital Region Committee. We have done a lot of work in regional waste management preparation. My predecessor, the Honourable Mr. McCrae, established a regional waste management task force to review solid waste management activities throughout the province and to make recommendations to the government of Manitoba on opportunities to support the further development of regional waste management systems in Manitoba. It is an area to which we will be devoting considerable attention in the coming year.

The objective of the regional waste management task force is to develop a regional solid waste management action plan that will propose a vision for a province-wide solid waste management system. It will minimize risk to human health and the environment and support the continued growth of the Manitoba economy. We are working together in conjunction with municipalities, the city and the Capital Region and the AMM, as it is called now, because they are no longer two municipal organizations. They will, in developing their action plan, review solid waste management activities in Manitoba, review waste management strategies in other jurisdictions, review provincial waste management facility operating regular requirements, undertake public consultations and make recommendations on waste management practices and funding criteria to support regional waste developments.

They will be concluding their work, we hope, sometime in the summer of '99. I am hesitant to give specific dates for reasons that if you say July and it is August, then you are in trouble or vice versa, so just that we expect sometime in the summer of '99 that they will complete their work. We encourage them to move along at a good pace, but we do not want them to move with unseemly haste. We would

like them to be thorough and make sure they have taken the time to cover their research thoroughly. When they are finished, we will be in an excellent position then to adopt and pursue an integrated solid waste management strategy. As I say, a similar exercise is focusing on the Capital Region as well.

The Environmental Youth Corps, I guess people are familiar with this one. They will be operating again in the '99-2000 year. I am very pleased to confirm that. The Environmental Youth Corps offers Manitoba's young people an opportunity to prepare for environmental challenges of tomorrow by gaining valuable education experience today. That program has been well received. The environmental projects eligible for funding to a maximum of \$5,000 include, but they are not restricted to, water quality, waste minimization, protection of flora and fauna, rehabilitation of the natural environment and habitat preservation. So that program focuses on maximizing the involvement and participation of youth.

*(1500)

Over \$1 million, during that last eight years, has been provided to 422 community projects involving over 40,000 young people. During this last fiscal year, a total of 56 projects received EYC grants totalling \$139,000, and they involved over 3,000 young people.

So it is a very good program, again, working in partnerships, and we find that those partnerships provide a most effective delivery system. It also illustrates the importance of community participation and pride in protecting one's environment.

Manitoba water quality, that is something we are all concerned about. I know the member this morning, this afternoon, earlier this afternoon, was asking questions that ultimately were about the quality of water. Or was it this morning? Sorry, was speaking this morning, yes, on a resolution he put forward. While I maybe disagreed on some of the processes, I certainly agree with the member on the need to ensure that our water quality remains high. The goal there in our Manitoba water quality initiatives would be to make sure we continue

undertaking studies to gain a better understanding of the impacts that maybe put water quality at risk. So we will work closely with the agricultural sector, and we will be looking, as well, to seek early solutions to avoid costly problems; again, prevention over addressing problems later.

We will work with the stewardship groups throughout the province. We are continuing to monitor the many streams, rivers and lakes in Manitoba to track water quality changes and implement early corrective measures when they are needed. We will provide the technical and scientific skills to ensure they are well positioned to respond to water quality issues both at the present time and in the future. We will continue to maintain strong links with local laboratories to ensure we have the technical support to deliver sound programs in both water quality and other environmental factors.

We receive a lot of our water from upstream neighbours in Saskatchewan, Ontario, North Dakota and Minnesota because of our geographic location, and we will work cooperatively with our neighbours to ensure that water, as it crosses borders, is of the highest possible quality required to meet our needs here in Manitoba.

I think on the issue of climate change I have made comments earlier in the Chamber. We are active participants in the national process that has been established in response to the Kyoto Protocol challenge. We have a national implementation strategy currently being developed, and my department is assisting in the development of a provincial climate change strategy. We are working towards the management and reduction of the release of greenhouse gases.

The State of the Environment Reporting: The proclamation of The Sustainable Development Act on July 1, '98, replaced The Environment Act requirement for state of the environment reporting with sustainability reporting. Based on the development of a set of provincial sustainability indicators, the first full sustainability report is not required until 2004, but we will incorporate information on sustainability indicators. Those indicators will

incorporate information on environmental, economic and social issues.

We will have an interim stability report ready in 2000, and that is intended to address the gap between the '97 State of the Environment Report and the first full sustainability report in 2004. This report will provide an analysis of the recommended sustainability indicators and present a focus on the issue of urban sustainability.

The department, of course, continues to work with a whole series of groups and governments and nongovernment organizations on those kinds of initiatives. From this group of partners, a small core team was established, and over the past several months the core team has developed a definition and criteria for sustainability indicators, a list of categories with which to identify sustainability issues, key sustainability issues for these categories, possible indicators to address the issues and suggestions for linkages and discussion between the categories, issues and indicators.

That information will first go to the full working group and then to the sustainability reporting subcommittee of the Manitoba round table and then to further revisions we made to a list of issues and indicators before we are into public consultations in the fall.

The department has an enforceability component, of course. The department this year was responsible for some 1,450 licensed operations in the province. These operations are obliged under the terms of their licences to meet certain environmental and health conditions. The number of key areas of focus in this regard include strengthening of the compliance program in the livestock area in keeping with the new Livestock Manure and Mortalities Management Regulation, increased Environment Act licence enforcement respecting forest management activities in support of the sustainability of this industry. That would include an audit of the Louisiana-Pacific air monitoring program, that type of thing.

Continuing to address contaminated sites and hazardous waste regulations is a priority area; continuing to give priority attention to

addressing Flin Flon air quality concerns, as well as water management issues in the area, placing increased emphasis on ambient water quality monitoring to ensure this critical resource is protected; regularly inspect all licensed sewage treatment plants to ensure compliance.

A risk management approach will be implemented with respect to Environmental Act licence enforcement to ensure that the department resources are targeted at those operations posing the greatest risk or concern and reviewing all components of the food inspection program and development of a clearer risk management policy and protocol for inspections and compliance.

As well, Mr. Chairman, we have a whole series of activities being undertaken in terms of a drinking water program. A very quick highlight of some of the activities: a risk assessment protocol will be implemented to determine the need for frequency of inspections and sampling of water supply sources; enter into partnerships with the industry re Canadian Water & Wastewater Association relative to playing a more active role in the operation of facilities.

Thorough regulatory review: a number of regulatory processes will be streamlined with more authority being delegated to the environmental officers and public health inspectors. Improved operator training will be pursued. Mandatory training will be considered. Local entities will be encouraged to take a greater interest. Those that use the water need to be more involved; and partnership opportunities with the Union of Manitoba Municipalities or the AMM.

Northern Affairs First Nations organizations, seasonal operations, the Parks Branch will be explored, et cetera. We will also conduct a northern community water sewage treatment plant operator training session in conjunction with Northern Affairs.

That concludes my opening remarks with respect to the '99-2000 Estimates.

I thank my honourable critic for his patience and the time that he allowed me to make these remarks and for his listening carefully to them. I

look forward to his remarks and the questions he might pose.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the Minister of Environment for those remarks. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), have opening remarks?

Mr. Dewar: I would like to begin by just welcoming the minister to her new responsibilities. I know that we have had the opportunity, though she claims it has been a very infrequent opportunity, to deal with questions in the House, but I like to think I have had a number of good questions raised.

I want to thank as well her dedicated staff who are here today and will be joining us soon, who are working every day to monitor and to sustain our natural environment in this province. There will be a number of issues that I wish to touch on in the time that we have today. Clearly some of the issues that we have raised in Question Period, we would like to follow up on some of those.

* (1510)

In the minister's comments she raised a number of issues as well that I would like to touch upon. You mentioned water testing. I think water is probably one of the most important environmental concerns that we have as a province. I know I get calls, and following the issues and are aware of issues concerning water quality. We raised that the other day in Question Period, not only the rivers but of course the aquifers that many Manitobans rely upon for their source of drinking water. You raised an important point about the expansion of septic fields in the Capital Region and waste management in the Capital Region. I would like to speak about that.

I recently moved from Selkirk to Lockport. We moved from a system where, of course, we had a very well maintained sewage system to a septic field. So that is different. When I was younger, we lived on a farm. We were used to the idea of septic fields and how that worked, but it also has an impact upon the natural environment. What we have seen in my area, and there is no denying that that there has been a

great deal of expansion over the last 20 years, the last 10 years, between Selkirk and Winnipeg, for example, on both sides of the river. There has been just an incredible expansion of housing units and most of them, I suppose all of them, have septic fields as their source to deal with human waste. So that is something we want to follow up on.

As well, discussions we have had recently and will continue to have is the expansion of the hog industry. But it is not only the hog industry, of course, it is the livestock industry, whether it is cattle or chickens and turkeys and so on. They do create a tremendous amount of by-products which have to be dealt with, however. You know, some cases the waste is simply sprayed on a field or it is injected. This is a hot topic, as you know. There has been a rapid expansion of the hog industry in Manitoba, hog production, over the last number of years, and I think it concerns all of us and we want to deal with that.

Last year my colleagues the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) and the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) and I attended a number of forums throughout the province. Some of them there was a little concern and in others there were a number of concerns raised about the placing of these hog operations. You know, poorly placed, poorly drained soil, near sinkholes, near aquifers that could potentially be at risk. We want to follow up on that in the time that we have.

As well, we have a report on the Consultation on the Sustainable Development Implementation report, the COSDI report, and in there is a number of very useful suggestions and recommendations. I think we should look at some of those as we proceed today. They talk in there about further public participation in the licensing of developments. They talk about the relationship between government and First Nations.

I want to talk about the harmonization agreement with the federal minister, ask about that, the auditing procedures and so on. I want to talk about the stewardship program, the oil recycling program. I had the opportunity to attend with your predecessor when he was in Selkirk last year, and we both participated in the

opening of the Selkirk oil recovery facility in our community. That is something which as an individual who maintains his own vehicles and changes the oil in my car, I appreciate that because I do have the chance—I know that the oil will be recycled. Well, we will go into that as well, talk about the Household Hazardous Waste Program as well.

But there was something I wanted to touch on. It was troublesome, and I guess anybody in my position as the Environment critic will have to deal with it. It happened today in the House, and it happened in the past to my predecessors in this job, and that is, you know, sometimes it is difficult to have a mature, responsible debate on some of these issues. It happened yesterday when I stood up in the House just to ask about some of the concerns regarding the Maple Leaf plant in Brandon. I stood up, and your side of the House associated the Environment critic with Maple Leaf, and without even hearing what I said, without even listening to what my questions were, it was, oh, you are against the project, you want to shut it down, did you guys caucus this, does the member for Brandon East know this.

That, to me, was not a responsible way to try to deal with some of these issues. You know, if I ask a question on recycling, are we going to be then accused of being against recycling? We have a job to do. We have a responsibility to raise these issues, and we want to be able to raise these issues. But that to me was a big concern, when you try to raise the issues. And you were there. You heard the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae) and his comments, and the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach). All he said in his comments, without even listening to what I had said because he was not there, or he had missed my comments, he said: all the member wants to do is shut down this plant in Brandon.

That is what he said in his comments, without listening to what I had said, and I do not know if that is a responsible way to deal with some of these important issues that we have a responsibility to raise in this forum. People ask us to raise these issues and we do. Manitobans want these issues raised, as well as we do.

So those are just some of the concerns that I have regarding some of the issues that we have to bring forward to the House. So, Mr. Chairman, I think what we should do now is we can get into some questions. You can invite your staff up and we will get into questioning now.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the critic for the official opposition for those remarks.

Under the Manitoba practice, debate of the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for the Estimates of a department. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of this item and now proceed with consideration of the next line. Before we do that, we ask the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask the minister to introduce her staff.

Mrs. McIntosh: I am pleased to introduce from my department, and I hope I am going to get all their titles correct. I will just double-check and make sure I am not giving incorrect titles.

Dave Wotton is the assistant deputy minister, and he has been very helpful in a number of areas already. I am familiar with his work and impressed with it. Gerry Glenn is acting director of Administration. Serge Scrafield is assistant deputy minister of Environmental Management, and Dave Wotton has Environmental Operations Division on his card.

These gentlemen, among many others, are extremely helpful to the minister and to the public, and I am impressed with the quality of their work.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister, and we will now proceed to line 31.1.(b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$365,600, on page 62 of the main Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Dewar: What we have done before in the Estimates of this department is we just asked questions of a general nature, where we just sort of moved around from department to department within the overall Environment department, and if there is an issue that the minister does not have an answer to, she could respond in writing.

If that is acceptable by her, I think that must be the most perfect way to do it.

* (1520)

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to have questions that should range throughout the Estimates, and then at the end to pass those Estimates? Is that the will of the committee? Agreed? [agreed]

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Chairperson, I would just like to ask a general question of the minister—she is a new minister to the portfolio—about just what her priorities are as the Minister of Environment for this province. She can discuss, perhaps, some of the challenges that she thinks she faces and we face as Manitobans, some of the problem areas, and maybe some of the success stories. She mentioned some of these, but, from her short tenure so far as the minister, maybe she can just tell us some of her priorities as the Minister of Environment.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I would answer that in two ways: first, of course, the priorities that I would hold would be mandated initially by cabinet and by government. So I have as my own priorities then assumed the priorities of government, which are reflected in the department.

Personally, my own personal feelings, you mentioned one item that is of high importance to you and it is also to me, and that is water, but, aside from those kinds of very tangible, natural things that you can touch and feel and look at and see, what I would really love to be able to do, if I could change anything, would be to change attitudes.

Maybe it is because I have come from the educational portfolio straight into this one, but I think all of us together have seen big changes in attitudes in last 20 years about environmental things. Twenty years ago, for example, my mother used to save her margarine containers and reuse and recycle them, and people used to tease her and kind of laugh at her because she was out of sync. Now that is common; people understand that it is important to do those things. She just did it because she was frugal, but there are deeper reasons for doing those things now or

for avoiding having a plastic margarine container in the first instance, you know. So I see tremendous progress having been made in the way people approach recycling.

There are still a lot of areas in the environment that people have not yet grasped. People will still make jokes about climate change. They sort of do not take it that seriously. There are still a lot of issues, such as those that have implications for our world, for our planet, for us as human beings. I think most people when they become aware of them do opt in very quickly and very easily and very willingly to work to be part of a solution, instead of part of a problem, but it takes a lot of educating.

So, if I had one kind of personal goal, it would be to see an understanding of sustainable development really be grasped by the generation that is coming up and by those of us in my generation who were not raised with it as a natural way of thinking. I would like to see it become a natural way of thinking.

Humankind has always been part of a natural cycle, and it used to live in harmony with that natural cycle for generations and generations and centuries and centuries. Then it went through a period of generations and maybe a century or two where they forgot to live in harmony with the environment, started abusing it in the name of progress, and we now have some big problems to address.

In trying to correct them, I think that we went a route that was not sustainable. We went a route that was—some extremists almost saying that humankind should no longer be part of the natural cycle, that we should not do or use anything. We should never chop down a tree, for example. Do not chop down a tree, instead of realizing that humankind has always used trees, and there are ways to do it that will not deplete forests. There are ways to do it that will sustain the natural resource for future generations. That, of course, is the sustainable development initiative.

We need to build a capacity for our clientele, for our consumers, our people to further environmental stewardship on their own

initiative, without having to be goaded or prodded or legislated by government, but that they see its worth and willingly do it on their own. We can do this by outreach programs to our clients. We can do it by education, and we can do it by videos, brochures, and this whole process that we are going through that the member was talking about this morning in his resolution of what the best process is, a one-stage process or a multistage process. All of that, whatever the process is, involves how the public participates, how the public expresses opinions, how the public gathers information, grows in knowledge and understanding, and makes decisions. I think, whichever process is decided upon, it has always got to include that component, and that would be part of something that I particularly value on a personal level.

I must indicate right off the bat how very much I appreciate the tone the member is bringing to this table because you indicated earlier your frustration in the heckling in the answers. I understand. Sometimes that is sent across because of the way in which questions are asked, or the heckling that comes from the other side. A lot of it sometimes is a response to what is being heard inherent in the question, and I can assure you that the way in which you are approaching this issue here, you will get returned back to you what you are giving me. I appreciate it because I am much happier with this cordial exchange than the exchange you mentioned earlier.

Maybe I will just leave it at that. That is my personal priority.

An Honourable Member: Damned by faint praise.

Mrs. McIntosh: The member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) says, damned by faint praise.

I mean this most sincerely. The critics control the atmosphere, and I have had the good fortune in the past to have had people like George Hickes, Neil Gaudry –

An Honourable Member: I am a good critic.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, and you were a very courteous critic. I have had others who have

been very sarcastic and harsh and cruel and pointed in a very negative way, and they have elicited from us the response that they give. So I just wanted to say that because it is meant as a compliment, not faint praise. It is meant very sincerely.

Mr. Dewar: Thank you very much. Well, yes, we have always had good discussions here in Estimates, and I am sure we will today.

The reason I raised that earlier is, I mean, I do not mind being heckled. All of us are heckled. It is part of the job. It is just that the nature of that. Right away, because we raised an issue, it was: well, you know, you are against any type of development. It is difficult. We are dealing with some of these issues, and it says right in your State of the Environment Report for 1997 that Manitoba cannot continue to develop economically unless the environment is protected. Continued economic development is needed to pay for important environmental initiatives, and I agree with that. The needs of the present must be met without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, and attention must be paid to long-term effects of both environmental and economic decisions.

I think we can all agree on that. It is just that sometimes it is difficult to separate that type of responsible attitude and then the political attitude, on the other hand. Anyway, I know that in this particular critic's responsibility, every time there is a development that goes forward, there often is an environmental impact.

You were talking about, I think, and your feelings, that we live in a province that has been severely altered, in a country that has been severely altered—well, in Manitoba here, for example, the last hundred years, severely altered from what it was and from its natural state which existed for thousands of years. You know, the tall grass prairie was eliminated and the forests were eliminated. I know in my area where I was raised, just outside of Selkirk, it is known now as Oak Hammock Marsh, but even when I was younger it was significantly larger, but it was drained by my great-grandfather. In fact, one of the ditches that they use, they have a sign up there that says Dewar ditch. That is my claim to

fame in the area, but it was an important habitat for waterfowl and it is again. I have known that area. I lived in that area all my life, and once again, it has become an important area for the breeding of waterfowl.

In one of your previous ministerial positions, you were the Minister of Education. Do you think the Education department in this province is doing a good enough job to emphasize environmental issues in our education system?

* (1530)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I do not think it always was in the past, but we do now have a new sustainable development curriculum which was developed through the Round Table on Environment and Economy, which is now called the Round Table on Sustainable Development. That curriculum was developed by a committee. It took a couple of years to develop. Dr. Christine McDonald, who is an environmentalist, was very helpful. She has a Ph.D. in sustainable development; one of the first Ph.D.s in sus dev to become official.

As well, I am part of a group called Learning for a Sustainable Future, which has been just beginning to work with the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada, and that curriculum is now available for schools and it is very good. We are trying very hard to help teachers become well trained in sustainable development as opposed to the old philosophy that I mentioned before where it was felt if you cared about the environment, you would teach people to never chop down a tree. We are trying to teach them how to work with their students to understand how you treat the environment, which does not mean never use it, but it just means you must use it wisely and always with a view that you will be able to renew your resources.

So there is training now available for teachers. So I think we are getting there. Are we doing the best job yet? No, I do not think so; I think we still have a way to go, but it is now being discussed at the national level with all ministers, which I think is a step in the right direction.

If I could just take a minute and I will do it very quickly, I had indicated my personal priorities, but staff has just made a really fast little point check. I said my priorities will become what the department and the government are mandated to do with my own personal priorities influencing it, of course, but just so you get a sense of some of the issues:

Livestock expansion is one where we have to make sure that that development is sustainable, and we know it is going to occur and must be done in a way that is environmentally friendly. The Maple Leaf plant that you mentioned, we make sure again that it is sustainable. Shoal Lake, Winnipeg's water quality protection is important. Pollution prevention, we are trying to work really hard now on preventative measures. We always have wanted that. We have always done that, but we need to get more active, because we can save ourselves a lot of problems in the future if we can prevent problems happening today. We are looking at the recycling of packaging, tires, oils, newspapers in greater numbers.

I would also like to see the multifamily—you had asked this before—dwellings get into the recycling in their—[interjection] Yes, they should be having that as well. There is money available for that, but it does take a will from the municipalities involved to participate also.

I will look forward, and the department is enthusiastic about the CCME harmonization, to working with other jurisdictions to make sure that we are all walking the same path, and that we are not working at cross-purposes to each other. We have a lot of initiatives underway there that we are working on.

Domtar, that final closure of that problem, which has been a long-standing problem out in Transcona, and we want to see that one concluded. They have started now the final stages of cleanup. I think they have begun this week to actually replace soil in the last remediation they have identified there as residential properties. That, hopefully over the course of this summer, will be tidied up, because that has been an ongoing thing. Then we look forward to that beautiful new remediated work done by Fort Whyte.

The department has indicated, as well, that livestock management, the regional waste disposal—I think I talked about that in my opening remarks—is a high priority as well. I think that about covers it.

The department also indicates in terms of what is being done in the schools from the Department of Environment. They have the SOE Report available at all school libraries now, which I did not realize. I learn things in Estimates also, and I am very pleased to hear that. The Science Teachers' Association is working with this department to promote sustainable development in the schools as well.

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Chairman, the minister mentioned the State of the Environment Report, and I have always enjoyed reading it. I have read the last three or four editions, and the most recent one, of course, I quoted from that today in my question, was in 1997.

As the minister has mentioned in her opening comments, there was an amendment to The Environment Act, and there will no longer be a State of the Environment Report but instead a sustainability report, I believe. That is fine. It is just that it seems to me we were expecting a State of the Environment Report this year. I always found it to be quite useful. As you mentioned, they are in some of the schools in the province. I assume all the schools have one. I know the libraries have them, and so on. It is unfortunate that perhaps it does not have a wider publication. I think it is a very useful document. I think it is very objective as well, and that is what I like about it.

So you mentioned something about there would be an interim sustainability report. Is that coming out this year or next year?

Mrs. McIntosh: That will come out in the year 2000. So that is next year, I guess. We are '99 now, so the year 2000.

Mr. Dewar: What will be the distribution of that report when it comes out? Is there any way to try to get a wider circulation of a very useful document? I am basing that upon what I have seen in the State of the Environment Report in past years.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, all of the people who got them before will get them again. I understand that 4,000 were going out, and we hope to increase the number beyond that, that are going out. As I say, the new report, the sustainable report, will be produced in the year 2000, and we hope the extra time between now and then will be used to develop a new set of sustainability indicators. We want it to be really current, so I do not know if that answers your question.

* (1540)

Mr. Dewar: As I look outside today, I see once again it is raining. I hope it is not raining in southwestern Manitoba where the producers there are facing a real challenge with the high water level. But I do want to ask some questions about that, and another one deals with the long-term effects of the flood in 1997.

Manitobans rose to the challenge and were able to deal with that in a very successful manner, in a very successful way. But, as well, the high water had an impact, I am sure, upon different environmental situations. Maybe the minister can update us as to whether there has been any long-term impacts of that flooding.

Mrs. McIntosh: One thing we had found was that the ground water aquifer was contaminated quite badly in some spots, so we spent a lot of time and a lot of money disinfecting the aquifer, capping wells, and that work took about a year after the flood. It has been completed now and it has been very highly regarded. The work went well, and it is being looked at as a success story.

As well, for about 18 months after the flood, the department inspected around 5,000 basements for a whole series of problems: mold, moisture, those kinds of things that concrete basements might experience after a flood of this nature. That inspection took about 18 months after the flood was over. Those inspections were done by department personnel. Those were some of the activities that we were engaged in after the flood basically as a result of ground water aquifer contamination.

Mr. Dewar: The minister mentioned that there was an aquifer that was contaminated and it has

since been remedied. Where was that aquifer located? In what area of the province?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mostly in and around Ritchot, south of the city of Winnipeg, in and around that area.

Mr. Dewar: Maybe the minister can tell us what were some of the contaminants that were found and at what levels. Will she assure all of us that these contaminants were removed from the aquifer and that the water in that area is now safe for drinking?

Mrs. McIntosh: I should, first of all, give the member assurance, the aquifer, the wells that had been contaminated are clean. They went back in some cases more than once as environmental experts to work on the problem. The problem was that there were wells that had been abandoned, that had been not in use for a long time. They were not properly capped. The flood waters came up and water got into these wells. They found that in some of them, there were fecal coliforms and other organic contaminants resulting from the normal organisms found in flood water. The flood water washed over the sewage lagoons, over farm fields, et cetera, and it contained pesticides as well as oil, gas, and so on. So that all had to be disinfected. The people could not drink the water then, obviously, for quite a while, while this was worked on. They checked it and checked it until it was clean again for drinking. As I say, it took about a year to correct. But those were the contaminants that were in the water at that time, and that was part of the flood cleanup that had to take place.

Mr. Dewar: I guess we could have expected that. All of us remember some of the concerns that were raised at that time. We heard, you know, there were estimates of the hundreds and hundreds of animal carcasses floating north up the river.

An Honourable Member: That was not true.

Mr. Dewar: Yes, and I am glad it was not true, but all of us were listening to the media reports out of the northern United States. We knew that these things were coming and I remember at the time, I believe, I raised it with the minister then.

He said the fact that there was such high water volume diluted some of the contaminants that would be found there. Was there any sort of impact upon Lake Winnipeg, for example? Have you seen anything in terms of fishing? Every now and then the Department of Health has had to close down, I believe, Victoria Beach or Grand Beach or Winnipeg Beach, Patricia Beach, because of the high fecal coliform count in past years, generally because of excessive sewage from the city of Winnipeg. Have there been long-term impacts upon Lake Winnipeg?

* (1550)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, ironically, in one of those delicious paradoxes that life gives us sometimes, because there was so much water, even though there was perhaps a greater level of contaminant in the water or greater abundance of contaminants in the water, there was so much water that it diluted it so that the water quality of the Red River was actually generally better in the 1997 flood than in other years, because it was so diluted. But the downside, of course, was there was such an abundance of water that we had the flood, which was not a pleasant experience. Staff informs me that since that, they do their regular beach monitoring and so on, or the powers that be that do the monitoring have not noticed any appreciable change in the waters and the beaches now in '99 or '98 than there were in '96 or '95 and the years prior to the flood. So it seems to be pretty much the same as it used to be and no significant difference one way or the other.

Mr. Dewar: All of us hope that the water levels in southwestern Manitoba drain away and that the producers in that area are able to get on their land and go about their business as they were able to do here in the Red River Valley after 1997. I believe most of the crops were planted, which was quite an achievement.

Will the minister's department be monitoring that area of the province to see if there are any impacts upon the aquifer in that area? I believe there may have been some other flooding. I am not certain if it was in the Swan River area or not. Are you doing regular monitoring of this because high water, as you say, overflows lagoons and it has, as you have mentioned,

contaminated aquifers in the source of drinking water for Manitobans? Is your department going to be monitoring any environmental impacts and environmental effects of the high water in southwestern Manitoba?

Mrs. McIntosh: I indicate to my critic that we will respond as requested by local governments or individuals if there are problems that arise for which we are needed. What we are doing right now is we are actively being apprised of the situation, but we are not implementing any specific actions at present. We are following it, we are monitoring it, we are being apprised, and we are sort of on standby ready to initiate a response if required. The area that we are talking about is one I am quite familiar with. It is where my parents grew up, and I have lots of cousins and aunts and uncles and things in that area, and the one thing that is slightly different from that area and the Red is that we do not have the same kind of soil conditions for starters. We do not have as much water, although it is not good.

An Honourable Member: Usually they do not.

Mrs. McIntosh: No, that is okay. Usually they do not.

An Honourable Member: I thought it is a dry part of the province, is it not? Generally a dry part of the province in that area?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, there is good farmland, wheat, et cetera. What did I say? I said different soil conditions? I hope I have not said something inadvertently incorrect. The soil is different, yes.

We do not have the same impact being felt. Fortunately, we had the flood of the century. This is the last year of the century. I do not want another flood of the century. There are problems, absolutely. The member is quite correct and they may need help from the department, but at this point we do not anticipate the same degree of assistance being required for this water problem as we did in 1997 with the Red River flooding.

Mr. Dewar: We have to raise an issue, then, related to water testing, and as the minister, I am

sure, is aware, at one time rural Manitobans, if they wanted to get their drinking water tested, it was free. Now they have to pay around \$27, and fees for other tests have risen as well. General chemical tests went from \$32 to now \$102. What happened, of course, was the testing was privatized. I know that rural residents have concerns about having to pay the fee for something so basic as safe drinking water. Does the minister have a comment on that?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, if I could just very quickly indicate an additional point in response to your previous question, just to indicate that the Department of Environment has offices throughout Manitoba, as you know, not just here in Winnipeg. We have the main regional office in Brandon. We have suboffices in Virden and Killarney, Killarney being in that area that we are talking about. So we do have some good representation in the southwest corner of the province. If local governments require support, we have people sort of onsite, so to speak. In fact, we have 18 offices all together.

* (1600)

There is a charge now for water testing. If it was thought that there was a threat to health in a region, the department could step in and do testing without having people bring them samples and charge them for that, if they thought there was a concern. But in answer to your direct question which I will answer directly, we have had hard decisions to make in government. You know, lately in the House, the majority of questions have been on health care and concerns there. We do a lot of talking about the federal cuts to transfers for health and so on, and the fact is that over time we have had to make tough choices in order to free up money to backfill money for health. We have had to start looking for places to generate that revenue so that we can afford to sustain systems like the health care system. That meant that sometimes we have had to do things like implement fees for water testing.

The other part of that, of course, is that the majority of people now are on a piped water system, and the water there is tested by the municipalities. We know, of course, we still do have people on wells in Manitoba, but more and

more they are on piped water systems. So, where they do have wells, the testing is available, albeit at a cost, and I regret the cost. I wish we could provide it without cost, but it is one of those difficult choices that was made throughout the years in order to ensure that some very high priorities did not go faulting. So maybe there will come a time again when that fee can be lifted or when water testing becomes such that it does not need to be sent to a laboratory, maybe other ways of testing that evolve as technology and science increase in their improvements.

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Chairman, the minister said in her answer that it was an effort to raise some revenues, and I understand that. It is regrettable that it was a basic water test, that there is now a charge, and I know that there are different levels of testing. You can get your water tested for irrigation, for example, if you are considering expanding or setting up an operation that requires irrigation from the aquifer. I can understand that. I guess it is just that I have a difficult time understanding why something so basic as water, clean drinking water—which is again a bit of a health issue, you know, if you drink water that is not safe, you will get ill. Does the minister then in terms of this follow-up issue, does she have any record as to whether the increased fees, in some cases new fees, are acting as a deterrent for Manitobans getting their water tested?

Mrs. McIntosh: If the member would accept my coming back tomorrow with an answer that I do not have, statistics—we can get them; I just do not have them here—that might lead to a conclusion for an answer to that question. But I will acquire the information and bring it back to the member, probably not today because we are getting close to the end of the day but bring it back for a next session. I just have to indicate in terms of cost recovery or a lot of things that were provided in quotations, free, no direct cost recovery or user fee or those things. There is now an attempt to gain as much cost recovery as is reasonable in order to contain expenses, in order to contain costs, and that, I think, is done in areas where it is felt it is affordable for the consumer, and if it is not affordable for the consumer then it may be something that—[interjection] Do you want to take a break?

An Honourable Member: No, no break, keep going.

Mr. Denis Rocan, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mrs. McIntosh: It is just sort of the whole philosophy of cost recovery where it seems reasonable to assume the consumer is able to allow government to recover the cost, that those are the areas where we will seek to accomplish that, but if it is determined that it is not a reasonable thing, then I would expect that in most instances we would take a second look at that and see if this is causing difficulty for people, which is not our intent. We do not wish to do that. We are just trying to contain costs.

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Chairman, it is nice to see you in the Chair.

So I think in your answer, you are saying at this point you do not know if the increase or new fees are acting as a deterrent or not, but as well though you are prepared to see if there could be a fee structure which could be brought in that would be acceptable for Manitobans. Again, I think there are different categories of testing for your water. It is basic, just a general test to test whether it is drinkable, and then there are other tests to see what types of minerals it may have in it, and whether it is suitable for irrigation and so on.

I know I went through this, but I was prepared because I actually had it tested for something, you know for a full test, so it was about a hundred dollars. But I think just a general test for Manitobans, that there should be something done to allow them to have their basic water tested, at least at a fee that would not prohibit Manitobans from using that test.

I guess my question is so she is prepared to look at this and to see whether or not there can be something done to maybe put a limit or to see if there can be something done to lower these tests or provide a subsidy to certain affected areas. You are dealing with an area, you mentioned southern Manitoba or in the Red River Valley where we are faced with that flooding, or in southwestern Manitoba where

they are faced with potential damage to the aquifer. I know of an issue just north of Winnipeg, in the Rockwood area, where—we will get into that as well, I am sure, with a propellant plant. It was discovered that the aquifer in that area was contaminated by cleaning solvents and the individuals in that area had to have their water tested, and I am sure it is ongoing testing. I just hope that she is prepared to look at developing a fee structure that would allow those types of cases.

*(1610)

Mrs. McIntosh: I hope that is what we have now. When I say I do not have the information here to know, has the number of requests for water testing changed and if it has changed is it because of the fee structure, which was what the member had asked earlier. I do not have the answer now because we need to look at the numbers. Are there more? Are there fewer? What is the reason if there are more or fewer? I guess my sense is that I do not think we have had a lot of complaints, have we, from people? Just checking with staff because being new, I do not want to say something I am not sure of. But I understand from staff that this has not been a subject of complaint from the public in a generic sense. If it is not a problem, then the cost recovery is extremely beneficial to government to help us with our desire to make sure that the money we have is there for health, et cetera.

If, in examining it, it is discovered that it is a problem, well, then, of course, as minister, I want to ensure that if people are testing the water, particularly for drinking purposes, I want an incentive for them to be able to test their water, so that would be something in that situation then that I would certainly review.

But where water is contaminated by an industrial accident or as a result of industrial action, our department ensures that citizens have water tested at the cost to the polluter, not to the citizen. Or where no polluter is identified initially, the department will cover the costs with the emergency response fund, so there are situations where the citizen is not charged for the water test and hopefully they would cover the situations where a need was identified that was in the interests of all best to have addressed right

away without worry about whether or not the fee could be met.

Mr. Dewar: Could we just take a couple of minutes break, a five-minute break?

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Rocan): Sure.

The committee recessed at 4:13 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:20 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The committee is back to order.

Mr. Denis Rocan (Gladstone): With the indulgence of the committee, we have had a brief discussion with the minister and the opposition critic, and there appears to be a willingness, by unanimous consent of this committee, to shut this committee down, this section, at 5:30. I wonder if you would want to canvass the membership to see if there is a willingness to call it six o'clock at 5:30.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to call it six o'clock at 5:30? [Agreed]

Mr. Dewar: It is amazing what we can do sometime, is it not?

When I was talking about the aquifer in my preamble to my last question, I raised the issue of the contamination in probably the early '90s in the Stony Mountain area, Rockwood area, and I do not know if it is in this State of the Environment Report, but there has been progress in past ones. I guess the contamination occurred probably in early '90s, '91, '92, because I know it was a '93 report. It is an area that, part of it, the aquifer is under part of my political constituency, obviously any kind of a concern like this I think is important to all Manitobans. What had happened, I believe the propellant plant, the Rockwood propellant plant, employees of the plant would unfortunately discharge some cleaning solvents directly onto the soil which

found its way into the aquifer and there was a great deal of contamination at that time.

I would like if the minister could provide me with an update of that situation. As well, I raised with your predecessor the fact that there are in that area artesian wells where local residents would go and use that as a source of their drinking water. I think it should be a concern to all of us to make sure that the water in that area is safe to drink. Maybe if she could just provide me with an update of that situation, please.

Mrs. McIntosh: The Bristol Aerospace Rockwood contamination issue was resolved with the Bristol people putting in a piped distribution system, so it was put in for all the local residents and the aquifer was cleaned up, but I do not think it is being used for drinking because they all have the piped-in water now. But the monitoring continues on an ongoing basis by Bristol. That is the commitment they have made in terms of the aquifer. I do not know about the ability of being able to drink the aquifer water. I know it is not being used for drinking water because of the piped-in system.

Mr. Dewar: What is the source of the piped water? I believe it is Stony Mountain, maybe Stonewall, and does the minister see a day when the residents, if they choose, could go back to the well water? Maybe they do not want to but if you are indicating now that it is all safe to drink, then perhaps some of the residents would be interested in going back. I remember that situation well, and I remember the fact that Bristol was, I believe, forced to contribute to a pipeline. But it was not just them. I believe the province and the federal government as well provided financial assistance to provide the water to the residents. First question would be: does she see a time when the area residents, if they choose, could go back to the well water for their source of drinking water?

* (1630)

Mrs. McIntosh: In discussion with staff, they indicate that the contamination has been confined to that small little area and that it is continually removed so the plumes that were going out are not going out anymore. However,

they would not recommend that people resume drinking that water, either out of an abundance of caution or because it is not certain at this point how quickly that cleansing process will take place. Bristol has stopped the contamination at source, so no more is going in. There is still that little concern about a small plume existing around that one spot. Bristol's cleanup is to pump and clean up contamination in the aquifer, but it is a slow process. It requires continuous monitoring to ensure that it does not spread. It has not, but it is always under watch to make sure of that. So the future is unclear at this point. We do not think it is likely that people would go back to drinking that water, and we would not recommend that they do.

Mr. Dewar: I do not know if they want to or not. I probably would agree with you that there is probably no interest in that. But the source of their water now is, I believe, Stonewall or Stony Mountain.

In terms of that whole issue now, as you mentioned, there has been an incredible capital cost to deal with it in terms of the pipes that were laid and the pump and so on that is needed and the plumbing adjustments that need to be done to each of the homes to accommodate this new source of water. As you mentioned, there has been over the years—I received a packet from the minister—was it last year or the year before?—of the number of sites that they have test drilled, and there were many, which I appreciate and commend the government on doing them, but that is again a cost probably borne by the taxpayer of this province.

Does the minister have any idea of the cost of this type of action, pollution and remediation upon the taxpayers of the province, and have they been able to recover any of those costs from Bristol Aerospace?

Mrs. McIntosh: I do not have the exact figures, but I can tell you that the town itself, Stony Mountain, had contributed towards the piped-in system. The Bristol company contributed substantially more. In fact, the townsite had contemplated bringing in piped-in water and, with Bristol's contribution, they were able to achieve that at considerably less cost than it would have cost them had they not had Bristol

there, like it would have cost them more than they ended up paying to get the water. That was sort of the up side of the problem that they experienced. The province contributed as well. Because it was back in '90-91 or whenever it was, we do not have the figures here. We could get them if the member wants, but I am not sure if you were looking for just sort of the percentage of the breakdown or the actual dollar figures. But Bristol did contribute the lion's share there in that particular situation.

Mr. Dewar: I thank the minister for that answer.

In terms of the artisan wells in that area, and those wells were the source and continue to be the source of fresh water for the Oak Hammock Marsh area, have they discovered any of the solvents in the Oak Hammock Marsh itself, or again in these artisan wells? I have raised it with the minister the last couple of years, and I do not know if he ever came back with an answer saying whether or not they are actually tested. So I will raise it with you again this year.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, no, they have not noticed anything like that in the area of the Oak Hammock Marsh, and I guess that is the short answer. They do not believe there was any contamination near the marsh. They did test beyond it, but the department does not feel there is any in that marsh area itself.

Mr. Dewar: Well, I am relieved to hear that. I know I have family members in that area, and my father and mother, they have not been able to drink their water for years and they have lived there for a long, long time. Well, my family has lived there for a long time. I know my sister's water has a fecal coliform count, a very high one in it, and my father's water is very rusty. The cause is obviously not this, but it is a general statement about the quality of our ground water and it is a concern I have. I assume that one time, at least in terms of my sister's situation, it was animal waste I believe that caused that problem.

Are you seeing more of this across the province where the quality of drinking water is put in jeopardy, well, not put in jeopardy, but the

quality is being decreased in terms of drinking water across this province, or was this just something that I have witnessed maybe just in our local area?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the staff has not noticed any particular change. Nothing seems to be different in a general sense than it has been before. But, having said that, Environment in terms of setting its own priorities, this is one area where they have been putting some initiative, and they have recruited, not long ago, a hydro geologist in Contaminated Sites Program and have just advertised for a soils/ground water expert for the environmental quality section. So they are adding staff to deal with those kinds of issues in a proactive way to ensure that, if problems like that do come up, we are right on top of them and are able to deal with them effectively.

* (1640)

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Chairperson, I could not help but notice, and I took great pleasure in seeing that there was more money allocated this year for the department, an 8.8 percent increase. That, of course, is why I so readily supported your budget, Madam Minister, because I noticed that line and—

An Honourable Member: And it caught your attention.

Mr. Dewar: It caught my attention immediately. Maybe you could tell me and just enlighten the committee as to where that increase is headed. It looks to me like you are using it to—and maybe you mentioned some of this in your opening comments about some additional inspectors, and so on. Maybe you could just expand upon that please.

Mrs. McIntosh: Sure. We have six new inspectors in the livestock initiative and \$60,000 in operating costs for travel. We have one new staff in the North to address water quality in northern communities. So those are the seven new positions. Livestock initiative, of course, as we expand, it is important that we have inspection there. In the North, sometimes the water treatment plants are not able to be kept up for various reasons. So we thought it was

important to have water quality inspectors up there.

Mr. Dewar: Will the minister tell us where these inspectors will be located?

Mrs. McIntosh: We really do have one in Selkirk. I was not just teasing. In the livestock initiative, the one that I talked about, where we have six new inspectors, there are two in Steinbach, one in Selkirk, one in Brandon, one in Portage and one in Winnipeg. The water quality expert will be located in The Pas.

Mr. Dewar: So you mentioned the water quality expert that is going into the North. Is that because you are experiencing, or your department is finding, that there have been some additional problems up there associated with water quality?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the northern position is to inspect and provide professional assistance in the operation of water treatment plants for drinking and waste water plants. It is to be housed in The Pas, and it will be working closely with smaller northern communities and with their local governments. So they will be sort of a resident expert to assist making sure that the treatment plants and the waste water plants are in good operation, an assist to the local population who may not have within their own local staffing some of the expertise that is required scientifically for some of these purposes.

Mr. Dewar: So this individual would be visiting some of the remote communities, one would assume. I had the opportunity to visit some of these communities, and it was quite an eye opener definitely to see the conditions that Manitobans live under in these remote areas: lack of indoor plumbing, lack of running water, and so on. So will this person be visiting these areas, and will this individual be reporting back to the minister?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, this individual will be travelling around, visiting different locales in the North, not reporting back directly to me, but ultimately anything that happens in the department is accessible to the minister. This is an area of interest. I am interested in it for

several reasons. My sister and her husband now live away up North in the Yukon, and they live in a remote community three hours north of Whitehorse, so they are quite far north. They have some of these same characteristics in the little village in which they live, so I am interested in her letters and watching here to see how the jurisdictions compare as they begin to deal with basic necessities such as clean water, proper disposal of waste, how they acquire it for their dwellings. It kind of piques my interest.

* (1650)

Mr. Dewar: I would like to follow up on an issue that I was raising today in Question Period, and that is, there has been a fairly alarming increase in terms of the transport-related environmental accidents between '91 to '95, which is the most recent data that I have. What has been the trend since '95 to now in terms of transport-related environmental accidents? Maybe she could as well make a comment about that and let us know the cause of these accidents and what, if anything, she is able to do or is doing to put a stop to that, or at least to get the number reduced. There has been a 70 percent increase between '91 and '95, which, I think, is quite high.

Mrs. McIntosh: I am interested in the stats the member has brought forward, you know in terms of why. That is a different question I understand, and there could be several reasons for it. But just an indication from staff here that the large increase in transportation-related accidents in 1991 to 1995 may have resulted—we have results: from increased product handling, 41 out of 44 versus 95 over 124.

In 1995 the department increased staff in the Dangerous Goods section and fully implemented Sections 8 and 10 of The Dangerous Goods Act. I think that, of course, would assist us in identifying farm accidents, et cetera, that may have been overlooked before.

Products being transported received more stringent regulatory requirements and also there was a reorganization in 1990, and the regional organization is, I believe, now tracking accidents better. So that is a partial answer, and I think

staff may have some additional information for me here.

The reporting mechanisms, if the member looks on page 143, just one page over from where he is looking—if you look at the number of hazardous waste manifests, shipping documents received, there is a very strong mandate or insistence now on improved reporting procedures. That does not necessarily mean there have been more or incredibly more problems there; it is just that there is a much more intense need to record and report properly on them.

* (1700)

The department has increased its training commitment in environmental accident response over the last four years, so we are now working with the RCMP, working with Transport Canada to increase our efficiency in being able to track and respond to accidents. So it is back to that question. I do not know if there have been more accidents per se. There may have been, but there is also definitely an increased reporting ability and it may be a combination of both, I do not know. If you look at the top of page 143, there is a little note there under Trend where it says: "Annual increase in quantities transported reflect an increase in generators and wastes added to the tracking system rather than increased quantities of hazardous waste being generated. This is evident by the number of registration forms received." So I just draw that to your attention.

Mr. Dewar: Well, has your department noticed any type of a trend between '95 and now in terms of this?

Mrs. McIntosh: Since 1993, we have seen a reduction in major transport accidents. That is to say that it was 1993 that there was a last major train derailment, and there has not been a major trucking incident in the last five years. So I would give some credit to the department, although Serge has just said we cannot necessarily take credit ourselves, but I think maybe they can take some credit because they have been improving their training and reporting and so on. But, anyhow, whoever was responsible, it is good news as opposed to not good news.

Mr. Dewar: Thank you very much for that answer. In terms of the other aspect of my question today, it dealt with the transport of the MOX fuel and mixed oxide fuel from this potential that test bundles can be shipped from the United States to Chalk River, and it could go through the town of Morris. I have a number of letters here from town officials who do not want this material shipped through Morris in any quantity. That is from Conrad Nicholson, who is the chief administrative officer for the town of Morris. Then he gets a letter back from Ralph Goodale, and they write another letter, again I will quote from their letter: However, you seem to have missed our main concern. We are opposed to one of the proposed routes from southern United States which enters Canada at the Pembina border crossing. We do not want MOX fuel passing through the town of Morris in any way.

I have a letter that was sent to your Premier (Mr. Filmon). In the House you sort of questioned my timing, and perhaps it would have been better to have raised this before, but I remember somebody once said that probably would not have been the best time to raise it. The second best time to have raised it is now. Do you know who said that?

An Honourable Member: Who?

Mr. Dewar: It was your Premier who said that. I remember once he said that in a quote in the House, and I thought that it was a very good quote and one that I kept in my little file ever since. So anyway, getting back to the issue, in the letter that the Premier sent back to Ms. Jarman, who lives in Morris, quote: Since this matter follows under the jurisdiction of the Honourable Linda McIntosh, Minister of Environment, I have taken the liberty of referring a copy of your correspondence to the minister for attention. Have you had a chance to read her letter? Have you had any type of decision made as to what you are going to say when you respond to it?

* (1710)

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, that letter has been sent to my office by the Premier (Mr. Filmon). It was a very well articulated letter. The writer's concern

was for the transport route, which is very close to her home and not that far from her son's school. I agree that she raised some valid concerns, particularly being a mom and having been involved with schools, I understood her point. She did not ask for anything specific of me in her letter. It contained good proposals, good ideas for the federal jurisdiction which were alternative proposals to deal with plutonium to the federal government. I think she showed good research, that she had done her homework in terms of looking into this subject area and not just responding viscerally but rather intellectually to the issue.

So she will be getting a response from me very shortly and, along with her, I will wait for the answers from the federal government to her proposals because that is the jurisdiction that needs to deal with them. I appreciate being copied on these initiatives, but I think if I were to indicate that whole issue on plutonium or nuclear waste or the transportation of those kinds of goods, it is not likely that it would be coming through that route. I appreciate that is not her main point. She is saying, if the route does go past her house, this is what she would be concerned about and what she would propose. It is not the best direct route through to Chalk River, so that is why we do not anticipate it would come there.

Having said that, we also do know that there are some very, very stringent regulations on the transport of these types of materials that have to be followed nationally. If there are better ways of doing it, then by all means, better ways of doing it should be explored and implemented, but getting material to Chalk River is high on our priority list.

As I indicated today, we want that nuclear waste to move from Pinawa and sent to Chalk River because it is one thing to have it here in Manitoba if there is a large component of scientists actively working with it daily, but the—I realize this is a different topic, but it is sort of all related—federal government's plan of just kind of leaving it all in Pinawa and having a small cadre of scientists there just to kind of monitor and watchdog on it is not our idea of proper disposal. Proper disposal of that kind of waste needs to occur in a place like Chalk River.

But more than that, there is an ability here to take that material and get rid of it in a productive way, use it in other ways that are useful, sort of the ultimate in recycling, and not then be having to store it because it is being used up as fuel or some other way. So there is research going on at Chalk River as to how to recycle, if you want. I do not know if you talk about recycling nuclear waste, but they have research looking at how to do that, and I think it is good to get it there so that that research can take place because I certainly do not want to add to the world's supply of nuclear waste. I would like to see the world's supply of it reduced, recycled, reused in some way so that it is not having to be stored anywhere. We certainly do not want it stored here.

So, if we do not want it stored here, that means that there might be occasions when it has to be transported through Manitoba in some ways. I guess the only thing I can say in response to that is that, given that there are high standards for mobility, if such waste has to come through here because the eventual goal is to get rid of it or to safely dispose of it, then Manitoba would do its share of insisting upon the ultimate in terms of precautions to safely see it through. Having said that, of course if it goes another route, we would be very happy.

But, it is certainly, when people like this writer send in correspondence with effort having been made, as it was in her correspondence, to be part of the solution, then her correspondence or correspondence like that should be taken very seriously because out of those explorations sometimes comes some good ideas. It is amazing. I think the member is fully aware how awesome it is that on occasion you get letters from the public that end up actually changing directions of caucuses, governments, oppositions. The public can make a dramatic difference, so everything that looks like it has promise is seriously considered. In this case, the ones that really have to seriously consider any good proposals would be the federal government.

Mr. Dewar: In fact, Ms. Jarman, in her letter, does get quite specific. I will quote: which brings me to my main question, Mr. Filmon, where do you stand on this matter, and are you

prepared to take a stand and formally go on record on the issue of MOX fuels?

So she is quite specific. She is asking your government's position on this issue. I do not know exactly the act, but I believe there was an act passed in the early '80s. I thought it dealt with nuclear weapon propellant, but maybe I am wrong. Maybe your staff can enlighten us. I want to know, I guess, if there is a law currently on Manitoba's books which would prohibit this.

Mrs. McIntosh: There was an act passed in 1987. I do not know if this is what it is called, but it dealt with high-level radioactive waste. That was at the time the underground research laboratory was developed by Atomic Energy of Canada in the Lac du Bonnet area, and it was to prohibit the underground storage of high-level waste in Manitoba, so it dealt with storage, not transportation. It is one of the reasons that we are saying that if the federal government is pulling out now with AECL, that they need to take their garbage with them. They cannot leave it here to be stored because we do not have permanent safe storage for final disposal. It is not an end destination.

* (1720)

Having said that the standards for transporting this type of material are extremely high in Canada, also, part of that is that insistence on how the stuff is packaged as it is being moved through. We had concerns; there was thought not long ago there might be some material coming in from the North, like through the waters to the north from Russia, et cetera, that we did not have comfort around in terms of the packaging. So that type of stuff we do not want coming through if it is not going to be properly packaged. It has to meet standards laid down by the federal government, or we do not want it on our highways, but we do have minute quantities of material, not this particular material necessarily, but nuclear waste, although I just want to make a little correction. The staff has pointed out to me this particular material is not necessarily waste; it is fuel, but the concerns about it coming through are the same.

So, if the material meets the standards, if it is properly packaged, if it is complying with all

that it must, and it needs to come through here in order to be properly disposed of so that it is not left in an unsafe condition that is not long-term or permanent storage, then we will support it going through, and we will work to ensure that our efforts see it gets safely through the province. Plutonium in minute quantities is used to provide power in pacemakers for heart patients, and it is in Manitoba now for this kind of purpose, I mentioned today, medical purposes, et cetera. Very minute quantities. So we take extreme caution whenever we hear—those are buzzwords, you know, put up the red flag and you move very cautiously.

Having said that, I can quite understand the concerns in the letter from Ms. Jarman. What I am reading in concerns such as hers and other citizens and indeed in the questions from my friend the critic is that it is just a concern that these matters be taken as seriously as they need to be because they can never be talked about or have planning surrounding them in a frivolous way at all. They have to be treated with the utmost caution and seriousness. Concerns from citizens need to be well examined when they are raised in this way.

Mr. Dewar: To move on, I have a number of issues to cover, and our time is short today.

I wanted to get into the whole issue of hog production and water quality and the plant in Brandon and so on. We have had a debate about this in the House, but maybe I will leave that because it is going to be, I think, a lengthy discussion. I would rather just, now that we are talking about water—and it deals with, I have to get back to my notes. I know it was raised last year about the Devils Lake diversion, and it was proposed by the Americans. They had to find a way to alleviate the high water volume in Devils Lake. It was a proposal at the time, of course, to introduce the water into our watershed and into the Red River and eventually, of course, into Hudson Bay. Maybe you could just provide me with an update in terms of this, if you know if it is still happening, or just a general update as to what is going on in terms of the Devils Lake diversion—in one minute.

Mrs. McIntosh: I am just going to give a quick answer because I know we are nearly out of time

and I did not want to not give an answer before the clock ran out.

We are actively involved. We have talked or been in discussions with authorities south of the border in North Dakota, with Canadian and American authorities. We do not wish to see biota organisms from Devils Lake coming into the Red River, introducing some new organisms that are not there by nature which might do some harm, which would not be in the natural scheme of things. That is where we are on that for a quick update. If you need more detail—

An Honourable Member: Okay, we could follow up next time.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes. That is the short answer.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to now call it six o'clock? [agreed]

The time being six o'clock, committee rise.

*(1430)

HEALTH

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Would the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Health. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber at this time.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Chairperson, I wonder if the committee might give us leave to permit other members, other than myself, to ask questions from the front row benches.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave for other members of the opposition to ask questions from the front row? [agreed]

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Mr. Chairman, I just have a few tablings from some of the information the member has asked for. The member for Kildonan, on May 20, asked for information on the primary health centres. I am tabling three copies of that. As well, the member for Kildonan asked about the agreement with the private surgical facilities. I am tabling three copies of that. The member for Kildonan

also asked about individuals waiting in hospital for a personal care home bed, both at the Winnipeg hospitals and outside of Winnipeg. I am tabling that. The member for Kildonan asked for an update on the status of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and The Personal Health Information Act.

The member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) asked for information on the Health library located at 599 Empress Street.

The member for Kildonan asked about the first phase of the implementation of the WHA development plan. The member for Kildonan asked about—on May 26, he requested a listing of the evaluation projects to be initiated in '99-2000, and the projects continued, completed in '98-99.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Mr. Chairperson, the minister should be congratulated for all the tabling, even though we have not got to my questions yet, but that is a lot of tabling. I am wondering if he could tell me whether any of the issues I raised yesterday, particularly the FT issue has been responded to yet.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I do not have that information yet, although I think I might still have it this afternoon before we are done.

One bit of information that the member for Crescentwood asked about was the issue of inspections and requirements for food handling. Just for the record, I will just take a minute. Manitoba regulation 339/88R food and food handling establishment regulation regulates food handling in Manitoba. Manitoba Environment uses the City of Winnipeg food services by-law 516089 for food handling establishments in the suburbs which has the same requirements as the provincial regulation for defrosting, holding temperatures and reheating temperatures. All food-handling facilities are inspected by provincial public health inspectors from Manitoba Environment or the City of Winnipeg public health inspectors.

Some examples of requirements for food handling. Urban Shared Services Corporation

uses food products that are processed and fast-frozen and shipped to Manitoba in bulk quantities. The products are defrosted in walk-in coolers in compliance with Manitoba regulation 339/88R, Section 13(3) which requires that potentially hazardous foods be thawed in refrigerated units at a temperature not to exceed five degrees Celsius. The food products are portioned in a temperature-reduced room onto rethermalization carts. These are kept refrigerated and shipped refrigerated to the hospital. The rethermalization carts keep the product refrigerated until 35 to 45 minutes before mealtime and then they heat the food. The incoming carts are checked when they arrive at the hospital.

To ensure the cold chain has not been broken, staff takes temperature checks of the products after it is heated to ensure that it is adequately rethermalized, and Manitoba regulation 339/88R also requires that potentially hazardous foods be stored and transported frozen or less than five degrees Celsius or above 60 degrees Celsius.

MR339/88R, Section 34(1) requires that all precooked refrigerated or frozen potentially hazardous food is rapidly reheated to a minimum of 74 degrees Celsius or higher before being placed in a hot food storage facility. I have copies just in case the member has not had access to them, three copies of the Manitoba regulation 339/88R to table, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairman, I thank the minister very much for that answer. I am reassured by the fact that there are City of Winnipeg and provincial regulations that specifically deal with the reheating and holding temperatures, and I was not aware of those regulations. I had asked for information and had not received that information, so I am very glad to have it. I note that the British regulations are three degrees, and I presume that that is just a professional matter of judgment as to what is the appropriate holding temperature for such food. But I thank the minister for that answer.

I want to ask about the severance arrangements that were made with members of the food preparation and service staff who were laid off, voluntarily took a severance package. I

wonder if the minister has information about the numbers and details, whether he can confirm the information that I have been given in that regard, how many staff took the package, what was the approximate value of the package or the cost, I suppose, of the package in total.

Mr. Stefanson: The member is correct. The voluntary separation incentive packages were provided. I do not have the details here in terms of the numbers of individuals affected and the financial impact or cost of that, but certainly I will undertake to provide that. If it is not available today, I am sure we can have it available for Monday.

* (1440)

Mr. Sale: Well, I ask the minister if he could confirm, when he does that, that there are approximately 306 individuals who took advantage of the offer from provincial sources I guess through the hospital facilities but essentially provincial policy direction and that the severance was for a minimum of 19 weeks, I think a maximum of 26, although I am not sure about the maximum, but certainly the minimum was 19. Not all of those people would have been full time so they would not all have qualified for the full amount, but it would be whatever their weekly salary was for the 19 to 26 weeks. My information is that the total cost was between \$2.5 million and \$3 million. So I am assuming that information is reasonably close, and I would ask the minister to confirm it.

But what I would like to know is whether the minister views that as a cost of moving to the new centralized facility. Is that properly a cost of that new facility initiative?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I will confirm both of those issues for the member. He has asked me for the number of staff impacted under the VSIP and the financial impact and the nature of the package. I certainly will cross-reference that to the information he has provided me and put on the record today.

Obviously then, the payment and treatment of that final amount, whatever it is, I will confirm with him the funding source and the nature of the treatment of that expenditure.

Mr. Sale: I thank the minister for that. My question, though, I think is a more direct and simpler question as well as the detail that I am asking for and he has responded to. Is it reasonable to consider the costs of labour adjustments as a cost of moving to the new program? That is, we had to lay people off, a voluntary arrangement was worked out, hopefully to the satisfaction of most people. They took it. Is it, in the minister's view, a reasonable attribution of that as a cost of moving to the new centralized facility? In other words, it is like any other cost that one would incur, whether it is for equipment or for interest or for capital, it is a one-time cost, presumably to be offset by savings.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I think what I should do is get the details to the first question the member asked me, and then I will certainly give him my views of the appropriateness of how that was handled. But, as he already indicated, it is not uncommon, when you are reorganizing, that you do have a staff adjustment, a VSIP, kind of a Voluntary Separation Incentive Program, or some other packages relative to training or other initiatives whenever you are doing any adjustments that result in the need for less staff. As I say, if I do not have it today, I am confident we can have that information for the start of the week, and I will certainly offer my comments at that time on the appropriateness of how it was handled.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I am sure the minister understands the implications of my question, but this is just another example of the kinds of concerns we have about this project. Nowhere in the original business case could we see any attribution of costs for labour adjustment. We looked for those costs in the business case that Mr. Sheil presented, and we could not see any one-time cost for labour adjustment. If we are correct that the level of those costs is somewhere in the \$2.5 million to \$3 million, that is a substantial cost presumably against the overall savings that the minister has talked about of \$15 million.

In addition, of course, we will have to charge the costs incurred by St. Boniface and Health Sciences Centre for somewhere between 12 and 18 months, depending on which hospital,

at over \$1.3 million per year for a minimum of approximately \$3 million further overruns in costs at the two hospitals. So we have \$2.5 million to \$3 million in labour, \$2.5 million to \$3 million in costs incurred by St. Boniface and Health Sciences Centre for meals they do not get and will not get and cannot get under the current situation because the meals are not available. The facility is not able to produce the number of meals that are needed, and the two facilities are not ready to receive them.

* (1450)

The additional costs of equipment overrun costs and costs on the project itself we are not able to ascertain at this time, and I hope the minister will be supplying the actual mortgage costs, that is the actual mortgage that was entered into. The minister knows that what was entered at the Land Titles Office was a maximum \$30 million and up to a 25 percent rate which is the standard way commercial projects are done often. Then at the end of the day the parties agree on what will be capitalized and what the rate will be, and given current law, there is no requirement to register that, unfortunately, so the public is not in a position to know the value of that total mortgage, so we do not know the total capital cost of the project at this time. So those are other concerns we have about the true costs and the true savings.

I want to ask the minister where he comes up with the \$15-million cost avoidance. I am wondering if he could supply the information on which that cost-avoidance argument was based to the committee.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, my source of that information is a combination of the Urban Shared Services Corporation and a discussion I have had with the Winnipeg Hospital Authority. I am sure the source from them of that is a combination of one or either or both of the Price Waterhouse-Marrack Watts study and their ultimate business plan.

So it really goes back to the same question that the member is asking in terms of the tabling of those documents as really ultimately being able to show very clearly the issues that he has asked me about over the last day or so about the

capital costs under a status quo versus the Urban Shared Services, the operating costs under the status quo versus the Urban Shared Services Corporation and so on. I know he was good enough to share with me a page of the document that he is working off of, and so on. So it really does come back to my ability to provide those documents, and I have undertaken in responses to his questions that I am looking into that.

Mr. Sale: I put it to the minister that the capital cost ranges were from \$30 million down to \$20 million, and that there is no place that I think you can show a \$15-million capital cost avoidance without some extremely creative accounting, which I am sure the minister would never engage in. The construction costs, which are presumably what you look at, I think the maximum range is approximately \$10 million.

I would simply say to the minister, I hope he will table those two documents because we would then at least be talking from the same sources, and we would not have to be guessing, I guess. That is what a lot of the time we are left to do from partial information that does not improve the quality of the debate.

It is simply our position that it looks to us that we have not yet got a cost for the St. Boniface renovations. So I want to confirm with the minister that I believe he said yesterday his understanding was that HSC's costs would be between \$2.7 million and \$3 million. We have not yet talked about the costs for St. Boniface, so could he confirm what he said yesterday. I believe that is what he said on the record, and could he tell us what the estimate for costs for St. Boniface changes in order to accommodate the new food service would be?

Mr. Stefanson: I will inquire about the issue of St. Boniface and their requirements and actually the time lines at St. Boniface as well. The member is right. It really all comes back to both of our abilities to work off of the documents that we referred to yesterday, the combination of the business plan and the combination of the Price Waterhouse-Marrack Watts study that was done in 1995. So again, I will look into that issue, and I will report back to the member.

* (1500)

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I think there is a third document that I have asked about, and I just want to make sure it is on the minister's list, and that is the actual final mortgage cost and final interest rate that was agreed to that was capitalized with Newcourt Credit pursuant to the mortgage agreement that was registered at Land Titles, but it was obviously in a preliminary form at that time. I am wondering if he would undertake to let the committee know what the final capital amount that was capitalized under that mortgage was and what the interest rate agreed to was.

Mr. Stefanson: The member is correct. He asked for that information, and I indicated I will also look into that issue and provide what information we can on it. I have also indicated, as the member knows, that I am expecting a revised business plan fairly shortly from Urban Shared Services Corporation. We will have to determine what we are able to do with that document, ultimately, once we receive it.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, does the minister have any views in regard to the ability of the department to release a mortgage amount? It seems to me it would be inconceivable that that would not be in the public domain. We are not talking about proprietary third-party information here. We are talking about costs that are being borne entirely by the public. Is the minister of the view that this should be made public without any hesitation?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I am not expecting any problem or difficulties providing that. If there are, I will come back and explain to the member what the problems are, but I am not anticipating any.

Mr. Sale: Just in closing, I want to thank the minister for a civil discussion of this issue. It is a very complex issue, and it is a very difficult issue because it is one in which brand-new technology is trying to be used on a scale that it has never been used for anywhere in North America before under circumstances that are not easy. Our climate is not easy. I do not think that any of us would want there to be a failure in an appropriate technology that can make for better food at a better cost.

The difficulty we have, and I am sure the minister is having, is that it is no longer clear that that original promise is being met by the project. I want to assure the minister that, while there are obviously political overtones to this whole debate, I believe that he and his government and we in the opposition share a common purpose and that is that we have nutritious food that is appetizing and attractive, particularly for people who are long-term residents of our health care system either in acute care or in long-term care settings, that the working conditions do not jeopardize workers' health, and that the overall costs are equal to or less than the costs in the previous system. I do not think we disagree about that.

I think the difficulty comes when we get what we consider to be strong evidence that the project is not working as planned. I believe the minister has essentially confirmed that, that there are additional costs, there are operational problems. There have been, as confirmed by many, many statements from both the Urban Shared Services and members of the various facilities, serious problems with the quality and attractiveness of food. The minister maintains that it is better now, and I have had comments to that effect from some patients who have been discharged from hospitals that they felt the food was fine. However, I have also had comments from long-term care facilities in particular that there are still serious problems. So I know there is a committee. I know that they think they have resolved the vegetable issue for long-term care. I do not believe the committee thinks it is resolved. The dryness of desserts—I do not think they think they have resolved the toast issue; I do not think they have resolved the meat issue, other than chicken, which appears to be the one meat that reasonably seems to handle the reconstitution process. I still hear from a member of my congregation whose wife is a long-term patient in Riverview about very serious problems with the meat other than chicken. Pasta works fine. Other things do not seem to work as well.

So I do not think it should be thought that we are ideologically opposed to some better food system if it can be shown to be better. The difficulty is that we remain unconvinced. I want to compliment the minister because he appears

to have an open mind on this issue, and he appears to be wanting to seriously examine the assumptions that were made and the business plan and in some of the earlier studies. I believe that, as he does that, he will see that there is substance to many of the concerns that have been raised and that they are not trivial and that both of us share the same commitment to quality of care. As someone who has had an involvement with a church for a long time, I visited a lot of people over a lot of years and I know that food is always a topic of concern for people.

In many ways, as the director of one of the nursing homes in my community, the Convalescent Home of Winnipeg said, for many of his residents, food is the absolute centre of their day because there is not much else that happens for them. He indicated that his big concern was not just about the centralized food question, it was about the fact that for his residents who are at least ambulatory, coming downstairs and smelling what was cooking and asking what was on and having some sense of anticipation that it would be a good meal at noon was a very important part of their day. He talked also, and so did the director of nursing speak, about how special meals for special occasions were very important to their residents. They talked about festivals, ethnic food for festivals, and while these are difficult to accommodate in a big bureaucratic system, they are relatively easy to accommodate in a self-contained kitchen. So that is why we have said that we do not believe that centralized commissary food is appropriate for people in long-term care facilities who have been there and will be there for anywhere from many months to many, many years.

Mr. Edward Helwer, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

So I hope the minister will be able to respond to the questions and that we will be able finally to be talking from the same data and be able to then exchange views on the basis of shared information instead of on the basis of partial information.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate those comments that at least we are in agreement

with the overall objectives when it comes to food services in our hospitals and personal care home facilities. I have acknowledged that this transition has had some additional start-up costs, has taken longer and so on. It has been very interesting that the amount of time we have spent collectively discussing food, and I am not diminishing the importance of food services at all because they are very important in our health care facilities, but every now and then I think of other ministries and the nature of the Estimates or debates going on and are wondering how much detail Education is getting into in terms of the detailed aspects of our universities or our school divisions or so on. This is somewhat different, but again I can appreciate why, and I can understand why. Again, it really does come back to the overwhelming importance that we all attach to our health care facilities. So I appreciate those comments. I have indicated an undertaking to review all of the questions that the member for Crescentwood has asked and with a view to provide as much information as I can.

* (1510)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I just have what could be a number of questions. I guess a lot depends in terms of the information that is available. I had indicated a while back that when we got to this particular line I was wanting to get some idea in terms of bed and bed occupancy in our health care facilities. I know back in November '95, within the system I understand that we had 2,543 acute care beds. I wonder if the minister can give us some idea of how many acute care beds we have today.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, that really comes back to the bed map that the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has asked for and it breaks out—I am going by memory in terms of seeing the previous bed map—acute care beds, personal care home beds and other beds in our system. We have been doing that for years now. I think the summary that we will ultimately produce goes back 10 years or more I believe, and I am expecting that to be available some time fairly soon. So that will provide the information the member for Inkster is asking in terms of the current—I guess it would be the end of March '98, '98-99, the end of March—bed

count on that basis, acute care beds, personal care home beds and other beds in the system. So I expect to have that fairly shortly.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, would that particular spreadsheet that the minister is referring to, would that include breakdowns then for our different hospital facilities?

Mr. Stefanson: The bed map summary that I described is done on an overall basis not a per-individual facility basis.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I know in the past I was provided a list, and I do not know in terms of exactly where it originated from, the list, but to give you an idea it was in regard to November '95 bed count. For example, they said that the Health Sciences Centre has 854 beds; St. Boniface, 557; Seven Oaks, 290; Grace, 261; Victoria, 221; Concordia, 136 and of course Misericordia at the time had 224. I am trying to get some sort of an idea in terms of the general direction that our hospitals are going in.

At the time there was a lot of discussion in terms of how many acute care beds were needed in a system, given the demographics of Winnipeg. I know that there was at the time a great deal of debate in regard to where the government seemed to be modelling our numbers after I believe it was Calgary where they had a very low bed population or per capita beds, acute care beds per population base.

I cannot recall the number offhand, but it seemed to be a movement in that direction. At the time we were arguing that you have to focus more attention on demographics, that we cannot just be closing down beds hoping to be able to match what they were doing in some of the Alberta cities. At the time there was also a lot of discussion in terms of which facilities were going to be receiving further cuts, like where were those cuts in acute care beds going to take place. So that is the reason why I ask in terms of the possibility of getting the numbers of acute care beds. In particular, I am referring to the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Stefanson: As I indicated, as the member for Kildonan knows, we have been providing the overall bed map I think for a few years now. It

does give the province-wide acute care beds. It does give the province-wide personal care home beds and other beds. I will certainly undertake to provide at least some breakdown, Winnipeg, outside of Winnipeg, of acute care beds to give the member a sense of that kind of detail.

I think what is important today, again picking up on discussions I have had with the member for Kildonan, is more and more there is a shift to working towards funding the programs and the services, and then the WHA and the facilities are working to ensure they have the appropriate numbers of beds to meet those services, whatever they might be in our health care system. But I expect to have the overall bed map fairly shortly, and I will certainly undertake to provide some further breakdown of that for the member for Inkster.

Mr. Lamoureux: One of the benefits of having something of that nature, I believe, is if you have some sort of a number because quite often—and the minister no doubt has been posed this question before—in some facilities, when we say that the hospital or the facility is full but there are no beds available, I have had occasion where I have walked into a facility and there are in fact virtually what I would classify as a ward full of empty beds. I think it is hard for the public, it is hard even for me, to understand why it is that we say there are no beds available when in fact there are beds that are in the hospital.

So, if we say that, for example—and I just use it for example purposes only—that the Seven Oaks Hospital had 290 beds back in November of '95 and—I have no idea, I am pulling in numbers, a guesstimate—if it has 250 acute care beds today, what has happened then to the other 40 beds? Has that space been allocated for some other use? I think those types of discussions would definitely be beneficial. Do we see certain areas that are just mothballed indefinitely? Those types of questions I think would be interesting to get some sort of answers on. So I appreciate the minister if he could get us some indication as to the numbers in our beds.

Is it safe to say that, whatever number we are at today, the government is content with that number or do we see over the next year, 18

months, 24 months still the need for a reduction in the number of acute care beds?

* (1520)

Mr. Stefanson: Very briefly, Mr. Chairman, I am told that our acute care bed count in Manitoba does remain today one of the higher or more generous compared to other provinces, if generous is the appropriate way to describe it. No, I do not see a reduction in acute care beds at all. In fact, part of what has been happening of late has been the freeing up of additional acute care beds by the opening of more personal care home beds, so individuals—and I think I provided some of that information today to the member for Kildonan. The informations that were panelled for a personal care home and were in our acute care hospitals, we were as high as 250 back several months ago and today that number would be in the 50 range, so what that does is free up more acute care beds, and obviously those individuals are more appropriately served in a personal care home environment.

I think it is also important to recognize that hospitals are treating more people today due to a combination of the changes in technology and the shift to outpatients. I think the member for Inkster probably saw that recent study by the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation that indicated that there has been this shift that showed the utilization of inpatient versus outpatient, that over the last several years there have been many more outpatient procedures. So, on an overall basis, there are more procedures being done for Manitobans. We know we are seeing more hip operations, more knee operations, more cardiac by-pass surgery, and so on.

I am following up on a specific question from the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) relative to the situation at Seven Oaks Hospital. The member for Inkster used Seven Oaks just as a hypothetical example, but the member for The Maples did ask some specific questions about the beds and the bed utilization at Seven Oaks. I am looking into that and I will be providing that information, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairman, I think that our health care comes in many different ways,

through our clinics, hospitals and so forth. One of the areas which I think the government and even their polling that is being done will likely demonstrate that where the government is not doing well or perceived to be doing well is in health care. The minister might disagree in terms of whether or not they are doing well in health care, but the perception that many Manitobans have is that they are not doing well, they are not managing well in health care. I attribute that in most part because of first-hand experiences, family members, friends that are visiting our hospitals.

It was interesting, the other day I was just going through some surveys that I often do and I pulled out one survey that I did back in 1990. All the surveys that I do, my written surveys, I get great participation in both the surveys that I am referring to. There would have been over 700 households that I represent that would have filled out this particular question, and I bring it up because I think it talks about the perception that is out there.

The question I asked back in 1990 was: do you feel that the best health care possible is available to you? At the time, 55.4 percent said yes. That is in 1990. Then in '97, I posed—it is not the exact question but the essence of the question is there: do you feel the quality of health care is improving? I had 5.6 percent said yes to that. What I have learned in between when I have done surveys is to try to have the same question as what I posed in '97, because they are different, and if I took the time to go through that I can assure the minister, and if he challenges my thoughts on this I will bring forward some of those actual stats for him, but what is consistent is that the public perception has been going downhill towards health care, has not been moving in the right direction. When I refer to the right direction you are not building public confidence in our health care. I attribute that, as I say, primarily because of what is happening in our hospitals.

Just prior to my standing, you had the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) posing questions about our food services in our hospitals. There have been many questions. You know, there is new terminology that is being used. I know Dr. Gerrard, our Leader, has

talked and so has the New Democratic Party about hallway medicine, and that is something that was not there I believe a number of years ago. Again it raises a lot of concern that is there, and I attribute that to what is happening in our hospitals.

I think the government, Mr. Chairperson, is not even coming close to addressing the concerns of confidence within our hospitals. That is why I do believe it is important that we have more dialogue within this Chamber and also outside of the Chamber in dealing with what is such a critically important issue to all Manitobans. When we think of our hospitals, we are thinking of our ORs, our ICUs, the day surgeries, lab work. I will wait before I pass complete judgment on the Minister of Health until we at least see those numbers for the acute care service, acute care beds. There has to be something that is there that is causing people to have to wait in hospitals.

In my discussions with health care professionals, it goes beyond the flues that have been often referred to or the time of year where there is more of a crunch. There seems to be a lot of depression amongst our health care workers as a result of the atmosphere in which they are asked to be working, in particular of walking around the stretchers and the wheelchairs and so forth. So what we are hearing from the Minister of Health is not necessarily consistent with what we are hearing from within our hospital facilities in particular.

At the end of the minister's remarks, he made reference to operations. I know former Health minister Don Orchard would often talk about the number of eye surgery or cataracts that were being done. To the government's credit, in certain areas the government has excelled in health care. I do not know if they have been very successful at getting that message out, but in certain areas, in certain pockets, there have been some things that have been noteworthy.

Even at times it appears that the government has listened. On the Health Links line, we have long been an advocate to expanding that. I understand there is a toll-free number so that now even rural residents can tap into the Health Links, and I think that is a positive thing. That is

something which we have been suggesting for years now, and it came about, I believe, primarily because, when we had the strikes going on in emergency services, there were some additional funds found to expand the line at the Misericordia. We lobbied to ensure that it would be something that would be ongoing.

So it seems to me at times the government does respond to what oppositions, whether it is Liberals or New Democrats, are saying. Yet I think that there have been some valid criticisms of the government, in particular with respect to what is happening in our hospitals, and we are not getting very much movement from the government. We are not necessarily being provided information to substantiate why it is that the government is not listening to the opposition. As I say, a good example of that would be our food services. Again the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) is posing questions about the Health Sciences Centre and the electrical outlets that were going to have to be put in and the costs involved. It seems every day, issues are being raised in which we are not necessarily being provided information that counters the arguments that are being levelled against the government.

* (1530)

Most importantly, when we are inside some of these facilities, and I have been into a number of the facilities, the consistency of criticism is there. That is why I think that it is important, going into the Health Estimates a couple of weeks ago or whenever I made mention of it, that I was wanting to go into, really, some of those bed count numbers in finding out what is actually happening from within those beds. I think it is a critical debate to have because I think, for most part, that in itself could alleviate a lot of concern. We can find out what some of our problems are in terms of that whole hallway medicine because that is where I believe the government is losing it in the whole area of health care for Manitobans, at least in most part.

But, along with that, I definitely would be interested in getting the Don Orchard types of breakdowns of where the province is doing well. One that always comes up is your hip surgeries,

knees. These are things that are crippling even for individuals that keep them out of the workforce or cause other problems in health care because they are not being dealt with in an appropriate fashion. Are we moving forward? Are we seeing more and more hip surgeries done? I think that there is a need to provide that sort of information, information related to our hospitals, what is being done inside our hospitals. I think that it would foster a better debate from within the Chamber and allow individuals to provide information to their constituents which is indeed as accurate as possible.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I could go on at length responding to that, and in many ways I would enjoy doing that, but I will not because we have had these discussions before and we will get other opportunities. I just want to make one or two points. The feedback I get—and I actually heard the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) one morning on CJOB. I think it was the Charles Adler program you were on one morning. I listened to you. Well, I will give my view. I mean, the feedback I generally get from people is that the quality of care in our health care facilities is very good. I get that, that far outweighs any criticism. Whatever ratio I put on that, 100 to 1 or 1000 to 1, it is overwhelming. Certainly, as Minister of Health, people usually do not hesitate to make a comment to me.

The member for Kildonan made a similar statement that he felt that the feedback generally was fairly positive about the quality of care in our health care facilities today. That is a compliment to the people in the system; it is a compliment to the nurses and the doctors and the health care aides and everybody who is providing that service and are working very hard, as we have discussed here before, working overtime and extended shifts. The polling and surveys do confirm that as well, that the majority of people say the quality of care is certainly satisfactory and/or very good. I think the concern that some have is the future: is that quality of care still going to be there next month, next year and so on.

I think the member is right when he talks about perception. Again, through polling and surveys we have seen how many people get a lot

of their information, and a lot of it is derived either from the evening news on their television sets or from the newspapers and so on. I think that has a lot to do with some of the concern that is out there. We have asked questions about the perception of health care spending. Many Manitobans think there has been a cut in health care spending in Manitoba. We know in this Chamber, we have all seen the numbers, that today we are spending \$800 million more than we spent back in 1988. We know in this budget it is up \$194 million. But, if you ask the public, a good number of them still think health care spending in Manitoba has been cut. I think a lot of that has to do with that extensive debate we had during the time when the federal government was cutting health care spending. A lot of attention was given to that by provinces and by the public, ministers of Health, premiers and so on. So now we have the situation out there where the perception is health care spending has been cut when we know the reality is we can show the numbers, we can give them to the media. We all know it has not been cut. There is a difference between reality and perception. I think that is the nature of several health care issues, and that is why the member for Kildonan and I have had this discussion about providing information, having quality debates based on accurate information as the member for Inkster says we should have. I welcome that.

I talked about doing a quarterly report in Health. I talked about different things we can do to get more information out there. I think that will make our debates that much more meaningful, and I think it will be more important for Manitobans, and they will be better able to judge the performance of their government and the suggestions coming from opposition and so on. So I agree on the issue on perception. I agree with providing more information. I certainly will continue to do whatever I can to address those issues. I could go on, Mr. Chairman, but I think I asked the member for Kildonan if we could take a short break, and I know he has a number of questions, so I will close with those comments.

Mr. Chomiak: We had discussed perhaps at this juncture that we would take a five-minute break, but I do want to finish off. I do recall that

occasion being on CJOB that morning, and I did say, and I have always said publicly, that the quality of care provided in Manitoba is first class. No question. There was a "but" after that, and the "but" was—you know it is hard to put it in several words when you are on the radio. The "but" was: if you can get it. That was the difficulty. The difficulty is getting there. I think with that caveat on it, I would concur with the minister's comments because I think that is the basis of my comments on the radio that morning. I do not think any of us disagree the quality is excellent. [interjection] The minister indicates that is a prompt, but I did indicate the quality is excellent, if you can get there.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Helwer): Is it the will of the committee to take a five-minute break? [agreed] Okay, we will take a five-minute break.

The committee recessed at 3:40 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 3:53 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I know one additional piece of information the member for Kildonan asked for was the community needs assessments of the RHAs.

I think what I would suggest I do there is I will send them to his office because I think they are quite bulky. We will only make the one copy. We will not bring three copies here.

Winnipeg and Churchill are not available yet, but as soon as they are they will be provided as well, but all the rest will be sent to his office.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for that response. As I indicated, I have quite a few general questions that I will pose as we go through and see how far down the road we can get. I am anticipating something like staying in this section the balance of today and, perhaps, next time we meet, and then sort of heading towards a closure with capital.

Having said that, I do not know if I asked for a list of the new board of directors of Urban Shared Services. If I have not, can the minister provide us with that?

Mr. Stefanson: I do not believe the member did ask for that. I think I provided or am providing or will provide the RHAs and so on, but I will provide a listing of the board of directors of the Urban Shared Services Corporation.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, also along the same vein, i.e., did I ask—I do not think I asked for it and just to ensure this is something that happens every year. It used to be in the Estimates book, a detailed breakdown for Manitoba Health on home care assistance, a financial breakdown. It is no longer contained in the supplementary book, and I wonder if the minister can provide us with that detail as is provided every year.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I am told now that it is being provided through the regional health authorities and the WCA. That is the reason for the change. I am also told with some work, we could compile that. I guess I am wondering if there are some specific elements the member would like, or if there is an easier way to get it because now what it would require is compiling all of this from all of the regions in the province.

Mr. Chomiak: I guess I am a little bit surprised. I am not doubting what the minister says. The detail is not as complicated. It is actually a breakdown of each individual expenditure by function of worker, and broken down as well by service provided. Perhaps, whatever is possible then, at least in the city of Winnipeg and externally, if possible, if we could be provided with that information.

* (1600)

Mr. Stefanson: I am sure we are able to provide some information. The member said by function of worker or by services provided, and we will undertake to provide as much information in both of those areas as we can.

Mr. Chomiak: Can we get a breakdown, a schematic breakdown, of the structure of home

care in the city of Winnipeg as well as who occupies those positions?

Mr. Stefanson: Yes, we can provide that. That will be under the WCA, and we can certainly provide that for the member.

Mr. Chomiak: The minister said it was under the WCA which is correct under their function. Because it has been reorganized in a different fashion, I am trying to get a sense of the organization, the reorganization and the function within that.

Mr. Stefanson: The basic functions are certainly similar to what we would have had previously. I referred to the WCA, but the way I understand it, it is the home care component the member wants, basically the equivalent of the organizational chart and the names of the individuals and the functional areas within that organizational chart.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that response. I am going to apologize in advance because we are going to cover a lot of material. I will be jumping around and I do not like to do this. I would rather go systematically. I do not think I can because of the nature of the material I want to cover.

The minister provided me and I thank him for the agreement with the private surgical facilities to eliminate patient fees. I wonder if the minister can provide us with the amounts that are paid annually to those facilities as well as the number of patients served.

Mr. Stefanson: Yes, we can provide that. We will make that available, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chomiak: I actually wanted to turn briefly to the Victoria Park Lodge. There have been concerns expressed to us and I am sure to the minister, there has been lots of correspondence with respect to meeting the needs of the patient in that area. Now the minister will recall that early in the Estimates process I asked about the provision of services to Levels 1 and 2 individuals, and the minister indicated that Levels 1 and 2 are still functioning. Previously in the Estimates with the previous minister, we had talked about the continuation of Victoria

Park Lodge, and the previous minister had indicated there was going to be some kind of a conversion to supportive housing.

There are two problems with that. The first problem is that the supportive housing concept, as I understand it, is a costing model that will cost the individuals to participate. The second problem I think is the fact that there is a need for individuals to be provided with that kind of service. The best example was the closure of the Oddfellows Lodge and the previous minister indicating that in point of fact that was a mistake. If one looks at the figures the minister is providing me with respect to individuals who are waiting for personal care homes in rural Manitoba, it is relatively high. I have been advised that some individuals who could have formerly been accommodated at Victoria Park Lodge have been forced to go into personal care homes, thereby reducing the number of beds available to those individuals and to the personal care home system.

So, with that preamble, I would like to get a sense from the minister as to what the status is of Victoria Park Lodge, why we could not maintain it as a Level 1 and Level 2 facility, and what the government is going to do about the needs in that particular community.

Mr. Stefanson: I will respond in part and I will return with some more information for the member. I know when I was out in Souris for the budget consultations this issue certainly came up. I had a chance to speak with some of the residents. I believe we are currently adding 10 personal care home beds in Souris, if I recall correctly, and the member is correct. The discussions in the community have been relative to this issue of conversion to a supportive housing facility and that it would meet a certain need in Souris and surrounding community. So, beyond those very general comments, I have not had a status report or update on Victoria Park Lodge or the Souris situation. I will undertake to do that and provide that information and certainly my comments back to the member.

Mr. Chomiak: Can we have statistics on the supportive housing concept, where located and what the exact status is today around the province of Manitoba, including the number of

units and, if possible, the cost for utilization of those units?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I will provide that information. We have had the discussion I guess through Question Period about the three supportive housing units currently in place in Winnipeg, a fourth one to come. There are some outside of Winnipeg, so I can provide information on the facilities currently in place or planned and basically the numbers of units and any financial information relative to them.

I think we are going to see—again, the member and I touched on this briefly before, the member for Kildonan. I think we are going to see more supportive housing units throughout our province and I think that is a positive thing in terms of meeting the needs for people at that particular stage of their life, but I will certainly provide the information that the member asked for.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we have also heard, certainly in the city of Winnipeg and perhaps outside of Winnipeg, that there are a number of projects, block attendant programs and the like, that have been undertaken by home care. I wonder if we can get a listing of those programs and what they entail, that is, those various programs that are now being offered by home care.

* (1610)

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, again, the nature of the services to the people in those facilities are the same, the home care services. I will certainly undertake to provide as much of that information as we can. The way I understand it, the member was asking about the block attendant home care program, so we will certainly undertake to provide as much information as we can on that.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we have already established that the VON contract is not signed. I am wondering if the minister can outline for us when he anticipates the VON contract to be signed; secondly, if he will table at least the highlights and the criteria of the contract; and thirdly—well, I will come back to the third question.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, the member is correct. Agreement has not been reached; therefore, the agreement has not been signed. I will report back to the member the current status of those discussions. Again, I am certainly prepared to provide the criteria. Whether we can do it in advance of the signing of an agreement, I will determine that. If we can, we will provide it now. If we have to wait until an agreement is reached, then I will inform the member of that and provide it subsequent to that. I would think we could potentially provide the criteria from the previous contract, at a minimum, if that would be helpful. So I am certainly prepared to look at all of those options.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I would appreciate that that would be very helpful.

Can the minister indicate whether in fact it is the government's intention to continue the process of contracting out services to VON, or is the government considering any other options?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, there are no plans that I am aware of to be contracting with anybody other than the VON extending their contractual arrangement. Obviously, the two parties are in negotiations, but everything I know is the WCA—certainly from the department perspective we have been extremely satisfied with the quality level of service.

We did discuss the one issue here about the numbers of individuals in the hospitals that were—[interjection] Yes, we discussed the assessment co-ordinators. That function is basically being taken over by the WCA. I think there are about 30 people, 20 to 30 people, in that kind of a range. We discussed that before, but other than that we fully expect that this contract will be extended with VON.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I do not want to leave this without just clarifying this. I had raised it—and it is a very unusual thing to raise in the Legislature—previously that we did have concerns with the management function at VON. In fact, the previous minister concurred that that was a problem. I subsequently wrote to the director of the Long Term Care Authority putting on paper our concerns about the management function out of VON and concerns.

I am wondering if the minister is aware of any ongoing or continuing problem and/or changes that have occurred in that regard.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I am told there have been no management changes or management functional changes at VON. I have had an opportunity to meet with the organization just on one occasion myself. There is a board in place which obviously reviews structure and management. To date, those concerns have not been brought to my attention. I will certainly look into the issue, look back at what was said in the previous Estimates and look into the matter, but there have been no changes, I am told. I gather that the board is generally satisfied, although I will look into the issue.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the Estimates indicate that the increase in funding to home care services is due to volume increases. I wonder if the minister can outline for us the specific volume increases that are referred to in terms of the—and I know we get into this every year in terms of units of service offered and the like—but what is the most realistic way to determine where those volume increases have occurred and to what extent.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I take it the member is looking for comparisons of numbers of patients being served, units of service being provided, and we can definitely provide that information.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, there was a time when there was a particular philosophy in home care that saw, for example, the function of home care co-ordinators—it could have been nurses or social workers—to reflect the kind of service that was offered in the home care system. Now I understand that philosophy has changed. I could be wrong, but I understand that that concept has changed in terms of the kinds of individuals and the kinds of services that are provided.

* (1620)

If it has changed, can the minister indicate how it has changed? If it has not changed, can the minister indicate roughly what the philosophy is with respect to the provision of

home care services from the level of the home care co-ordinators and the services that are meted out to various individuals who require the service?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I am told the philosophy of home care co-ordinators has not changed. I am sure, as the member knows, the home care co-ordinator does the assessment of the individuals in terms of their individual care plan and the requirements to maintain them in their home with appropriate services and in a safe environment. So that is the home care co-ordinator. The home care resource co-ordinator manages the resources to meet those services that are provided, but I am told there has been no change in philosophy in terms of home care co-ordination.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, has there been a change in the function of either the home care co-ordinators or the home care resource co-ordinators in terms of their activities? Is there a move to meld the two together to move in another direction, or is that still the same?

Mr. Stefanson: Again, Mr. Chairman, I am told that the intention is to maintain the two separate functions, that they are very distinct. There is no plan to meld them into one that I am aware of, and I am being told that there is no plan to do that.

Mr. Chomiak: Would it also be possible to get a list of the number of workers in each area—and I realize it might be difficult in some areas—of each of the functions throughout the home care system?

Mr. Stefanson: I am sure we are capable of pulling together almost any information. I just want to be clear, functional areas or geographic areas? What is the member—[interjection] Well, on that kind of a basis, functional areas like the member said, co-ordinators, resource co-ordinators, nurses, I believe we should be able to provide that information.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that comment. Can the minister indicate how the computerization is going at Home Care and what the cost is this year?

Mr. Ed Helwer, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Stefanson: The member is quite familiar I am sure with the SACPAT system that is being utilized. It is currently being utilized at two community sites. The plan is to roll it out in its entirety this fall. It is being funded in large part by the federal government, and I can certainly return with the exact costs in terms of the costs to us as a provincial government and the contribution that the federal government is making.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister provide us with numbers on the self-managed care program, that is, number of individuals involved, urban and rural, and what the plans are for the program this year and if possible in the future?

Mr. Stefanson: The most recent stats I have here today on the self-managed care is currently there are 105 self-managers receiving funding, 82 in Winnipeg, five in Interlake, 11 in Westman, five in Central, and two in Thompson, and it is certainly our intention to carry on and really expand this program.

* (1630)

Mr. Chomiak: About two years ago, an idea was floated about for the creation of a personal care home for the young disabled.

I am wondering if the minister can give us any insight as to whether or not that idea is now cancelled forever, or whether the government is thinking along those lines. It was the idea for the co-ordination and put together of a personal care home that would be dedicated to the young disabled.

Mr. Stefanson: I am told that, based on discussions with the disabled community, it was decided not to proceed with that kind of a facility, that the organizations, the individuals themselves, wanted to be more community-based, initiatives like the self-managed care and so on, so that is the focus of the department.

Mr. Chomiak: I wanted to ask some questions on Ten Ten Sinclair, but I am going to return to that on Monday. I do not have all the

information that would assist us in dealing with this issue.

I was going to jump to the prosthetic and orthotic devices portion, the Prosthetic and Orthotic Devices program, which is item 4.(b). I am wondering if the minister can, and I apologize, I may have asked for this as well, for a listing of all of the devices, and I think I did ask for it which is pending. One of the issues that I have corresponded with the minister about is the diaper issue. I am wondering if the minister can outline for me what the policy is with respect to provision of that kind of service to individuals, what the limits are, what the guidelines are.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I am told, when it comes to incontinent supplies, the diaper issue the member referred to, that if they are on the Home Care program or the self-managed program we just finished discussing, those supplies are in fact provided to the individual.

Mr. Chomiak: I intend to correspond further with the minister on this. I corresponded in the past, and I have some additional information. I believe there is a limit that is placed and I stand to be corrected. I believe the problem here is I think there is a limit that is placed on the number of incontinence pads that are provided. That is causing some difficulty. I will correspond with the minister on that particular issue. Perhaps that is really actually the way to deal with it, but I wanted to get a general sense of the program.

Mr. Stefanson: Well, it all relates to the discussion that again the supplies are based on the assessed need from the case co-ordinator. So, again, I welcome the member putting this issue down in writing to me, and I will respond quickly to that.

Mr. Chomiak: One thing that I have never received in the Estimates is an analysis of how those determinations are made. I wonder if the minister can provide for us the criteria. I know they are not regulations but the applicable standards that are dealt with in order to make those determinations.

Mr. Stefanson: If I understood the question, it was the eligibility criteria for the Home Care

program. That is how I interpreted it, if we can provide the eligibility criteria, copy of the assessments tools and requirements. We can certainly provide that.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that response. Can we get a breakdown of the expenditures under the Emergency Response and Transport Services that are estimated in the book at \$11.5 million, the breakdown as to what categories those fall in?

Mr. Stefanson: No problem, I can provide the breakdown. The member will notice a fairly significant increase year over year in that area, and that is driven basically by the northern patient transportation allowance which the federal government used to pay for in certain situations which is another example of an issue that has been offloaded to provincial costs.

Mr. Chomiak: I would appreciate receiving that, and we both can BF it for future debates that are upcoming in the next several months. Item 21.4.(b) is the breakdown of Healthy Communities Development. I know we have gotten a listing of programs that are offered there in the past, and there is a listing in the supplementary Estimates books that indicates some of the activities under the Healthy Communities Development Fund. I wonder if we can have a listing. I presume it is not available this year, but if we could have a listing of the expenditures, the breakdown under the Healthy Communities Development Fund for last year and this year if that is at all possible.

Mr. Stefanson: Definitely, we can provide a breakdown for '98-99. I might even be able to give the member a sense of some of the projects we are looking at in 1999-2000, but definitely a breakdown of '98-99.

* (1640)

Mr. Chomiak: Can we just have a brief explanation of what the \$5.7-million expenditure is for nursing education?

Mr. Stefanson: It is really two areas: the faculty of nursing at the University of Manitoba and the licensed practical nursing program at Assiniboine Community College.

Mr. Chomiak: We are pending receipt of information with respect to board members, et cetera. Are we going to receive that today, or are we waiting till next week to receive breakdowns of who is on the boards of directors of the various regional health authorities, et cetera, or did we get it already?

I understand that the minister has provided it, so my apologies in terms of that information. I have to now dig it out for my colleague's hands and pursue it that way. There is a fairly extensive listing in last year's annual report of the Department of Health with respect to the doctor recruitment and retention program that has been offered by the provincial government.

Can we get an update with respect to the retention and recruitment program that is being offered by the provincial government, or can I take it from the listing in the last annual report, which is somewhat dated, that it is the same program? Well, put another way, can I get an update as to the program?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, we can provide that as well. We will provide an update, a status report of the plan for physician recruitment.

Mr. Chomiak: In the spring of 1998, we prepared a proposal for the Department of Health with respect to the training and the offering of residency positions for foreign-trained Manitoba-Canadian doctors. I have never received a reply from the previous minister of Health with respect to that, and I am wondering if the minister could review the correspondence and examine that particular proposal, because I think that proposal or components of it would be most useful to the province.

Mr. Stefanson: I would welcome the member just clarifying that a little bit. I can certainly go back to the spring of '98 and look at what was provided. He has intrigued me. If there is a proposal there that we should be looking at, that will assist us with the issue of physician recruitments, so if he could just give a little bit more information I would appreciate that.

Mr. Chomiak: I will follow up in writing to the minister, but it specifically was our solution to

try to provide additional residency positions for Canadian foreign-trained resident doctors in Manitoba, of which the minister is well aware. There are about 100, of which probably 20 or so would qualify for positions if residency positions were available and for a program and a policy in that regard.

Now there has been some limited response from the government, but not specifically to our very specific proposal outlined, and I will follow that up with writing and a copy of the proposal to the minister.

Mr. Stefanson: I would thank the member for that clarification, and I look forward to any information or proposal that he can provide us. It is not unlike the discussion we had when we were talking about nurses, but we have a similar situation relative to nurses in Manitoba as well. There are Manitoba nurses, foreign trained, that we are also looking at finding ways to bring into our health care system, so I would welcome that letter from the member.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Chomiak: Aside from the Central Health Services contract that provides the backup for home care services, as well as the VON contract, can we have a listing of all of the contracts for services that are provided to home care and the values of those contracts? Now I am talking about service contracts.

Mr. Stefanson: I will provide that. I am told that should be available quickly.

Mr. Chomiak: Also, the long-term services this year are budgeted at \$300 million. Can we get a breakdown roughly? I know it may be difficult because of the regionalized authority, but I am trying to get a sense of how much of that is personal care homes and how much of that is other services. If we can get a breakdown along those lines, would that be possible?

Mr. Stefanson: I am told that the entire amount in this case goes to personal care homes, whether it be the nonprofit, the proprietary, through the regions and through the WCA, and directly I guess to the proprietary.

Mr. Chomiak: Do we have any figures on a province-wide basis on what the amount is that individuals pay for their portion of the payment for residents in a personal care home?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, for Level III and Level IV personal care homes, which is the majority in our personal care homes today, the provincial government pays approximately 75 percent of the cost, and that is what is reflected here is the net cost. We do have a residential rate schedule that I can provide the member. He has probably seen it before, which ranges I think anywhere from about \$25 to about \$58.40, all tied to incomes. If the member would like a copy of that grid, what the residences pay based on certain income levels, we can provide that as well.

* (1650)

Mr. Chomiak: The minister said net cost. Is the minister saying that the \$300 million is the provincial portion exclusive of the payments from residents, or is the \$300 million inclusive of the payments from residents?

Mr. Stefanson: The \$300 million is exclusive of the residential charge, that is over and above the \$300 million.

Mr. Chomiak: Would it be fair to extrapolate, since the minister said the breakdown was something like 75 percent to 25 percent, therefore, that the resident portion of personal care home fees this year, for example, would be in the range of \$125 million or something like that?

Mr. Stefanson: The member is on the right track except it would be about a hundred million, \$105 million. That would be roughly what the residential charges would be, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairperson: This committee is just going to suspend for two minutes, and the Speaker is going to come to the Chair.

IN SESSION

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am asking for leave of the

House for the committee in Room 255, I believe, to rise at 5:30 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau): Is there leave of the House for the committee in Room 255 to rise at 5:30 p.m.? Leave? [agreed]

HEALTH (Continued)

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Chairperson, is it possible to give me a breakdown of the resident portion fees that have been paid for the last, say, five years?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Mr. Chairman, I am not sure why the member is asking for that, but I am told we can provide that.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, that will be useful information in order to evaluate and to better enlighten all those involved in the health care field, which is something that we agreed upon mutually as a mutual benefit.

The Estimates book indicates their enhanced programs for Community and Mental Health Services. Could I just have a listing of those enhanced programs, not today, but at some point, that are delineated in the \$11-million increase for Community and Mental Health Services? Unless the minister has already provided that for me in terms of community programs. Specifically, we are more interested in the Mental Health programs, but I did want a breakdown as to what those enhanced programs were.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, once again, there will be no problem providing that.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I have to apologize at this point, but has the minister tabled the information with respect to Pharmacare that we requested?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I apologize. Now my memory is being tested. I cannot recall specifically, and staff are trying to recall as well, what was requested. I know we talked a little bit about Pharmacare, and then we also said Pharmacare comes further on in our Estimates

on page 88, so I am not sure whether the member actually asked for something specific at that time or said he would probably ask when we got to Pharmacare.

Mr. Chomiak: Well, it certainly would not surprise me if I actually did not ask the questions. I mean, that is quite probable. If the staff indicates that there was not, then I will bet my money on their memories rather than my own.

I wonder if we can get a listing of the number of Manitobans who received benefits and a breakdown of the benefits that have been offered under Pharmacare.

* (1700)

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, once again, we can definitely provide that information.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister please give me a specific update as to what the status is of the lifesaving drug program?

Mr. Stefanson: I do not have the appropriate staff here, but we can certainly return with the status of that. I think, as the member knows, that program was basically rolled into the special drug program within the overall Pharmacare program and grandfathered certain individuals. So I will certainly bring a status report on that.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, I would appreciate an update, and I usually get an update on that in order to ascertain the way that the system is working.

Has there been an evaluation of the effect of the Pharmacare program since the government has made the changes to the program and, if that evaluation has been made, can we get a copy of it?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, there has been no formal evaluation of the Pharmacare program. We obviously assess it on an ongoing basis. As the member can see, the expenditures in 1999-2000 are up by some \$10 million. It certainly seems to be functioning the way we expected, that for the lower income earners with the high needs it is meeting their requirements.

But I can undertake to give the member a status report on the Pharmacare program, because we do monitor it internally. Of course, he knows the process for any new drugs coming on stream. We discussed that I think in Estimates, the whole issue of the drug—what is the name of that committee? Drug Standards and Therapeutics review committee—in terms of accepting their recommendations for any drugs that are added to the formulary.

Mr. Chomiak: Of course, it has always been our contention that despite the fact that pharmaceuticals and the cost of drugs have increased dramatically and have been identified in numerous reports, that at the same time, the preventative effect on the health care system is such that it justifies the probable use of many of those drugs, and in fact is better for the system now.

The minister has indicated I happened to be within earshot of a scrum the other day. The fact that Aricept, for example, is going for a third occasion before the drug standards and review committee, in the event that the committee rejects, and I do not normally ask hypotheticals, but I will explain why. In the event that the committees should reject the use of Aricept, has the minister considered or are there options the minister could consider in order to provide some form of coverage for the drug, something along the lines of a trial or a basis that is related that was similar to what was done with Betaseron?

In other words, the reality is Aricept is going to be recognized and going to be covered. It is only a question of when. The issue is what methodology could be used to accommodate that need in the event that the drug formula and standards and therapeutics committee should reject it at the end of the month?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, that is not the first time I have seen the member for Kildonan within earshot during a scrum, but I really think we should wait for the committee to do their review. Right now, currently today, as the member would have heard me say, no province other than Ontario is covering Aricept but it is interesting. We are getting more information on just precisely what the case is in Ontario, but I am told on a preliminary basis that Ontario has

reached an agreement with Pfizer Canada, the manufacturer, to offer provisional coverage on Aricept using a trial prescription program effective June 1 of this year.

We are going to get more information on what they are doing just while the committee, the Manitoba Drug Standards and the Therapeutics review committee, is doing their assessment, but I think beyond those kinds of comments I think I will wait for the committee to give us their recommendation as a first step.

Mr. Chomiak: Now the previous minister and I had this discussion last year, mostly arising out of the Betaseron. The minister indicated that he had put in place, and I think the process is quicker as a result of some changes he had made, but I think that this issue is going to come up on a more frequent basis. There is an interesting option that is presented by the Ontario approach, which probably could be expedited fairly quickly in the event, the hypothetical event, that the Drug Standards and Therapeutics Committee should reject Aricept. I think that it would be useful for the province to be looking at those kinds of mechanisms as an alternative because, I mean, frankly, it is easy to say, as critic of course, but given the information that has been provided to me, both from the study's viewpoint as well as from subjective evidence that has been provided, I think we will be looking at having it put on the formulary one way or the other in the near or medium future.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, again, I think I should wait for the committee. I am told when the committee reviewed Betaseron, and I would have to look back at how they worded it, but that they did not give an outright no. They gave it what is being described as a yellow light, and as a result, it led to that pilot project here in Manitoba. So we are definitely going to be looking at what Ontario has done to get all of the details on Ontario, and the manufacturing company themselves, I know, are submitting information on that issue as well. So we certainly will have, I think, adequate information at our disposal to make any decisions we have to make.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, can the minister outline for me and give me an update on

the DUMSC project as it relates to the pharmaceuticals?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, the member can probably tell from my discussion not much has happened with that issue, so what I should do is get some background and give the member a status report on what our thoughts are and what our plans are.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, do I take it from the minister's staff that is here that I should not necessarily get into questions of physician and other professional services today, and perhaps on Monday?

*(1710)

Mr. Stefanson: If the member is saying that he wants to talk about doctors and remuneration and those issues, I have the appropriate staff here if we want to do that for the last half hour. It is really his call, whatever he sees that works here.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I can go two ways. I can go down the enumeration, doctors, chiropractors, optometrists line, or I can go down the line of programs being offered by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, the number of programs being offered and status of those programs and the like, so whatever is most functional.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I think we could do either, but just based on the two general areas, if the member is talking about programs on the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and so on, the likelihood no matter what staff I have here, I will have to get back to him probably on most of them so maybe that is the better one to do today and it just gives us that much more time to prepare the material.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, perhaps then that is the best way to function, and I should tell the minister that what our intentions are, subject to the inevitable changes. Our intentions certainly are to move very quickly through this area and then on Monday quite quickly through a lot of not the balance of the information that is before us.

Mr. Stefanson: I appreciate at least that sense of what might happen. I notice he brought a smile to the face of the staff. I appreciate at least that sense of we all recognize this is all subject to variables but I appreciate that.

Mr. Chomiak: Well, commencing along this area, can the minister please outline for us the status of the cardiac program changes that are taking place, that is the transition from St. Boniface to Health Sciences Centre as well as information that has been reported that the number of cardiac surgeries is going to be decreased this year or reduced this year, and I wonder if the minister can provide this information on both those points.

Mr. Stefanson: On both of those I will return to the member. I think the issue of the transition of the program from St. Boniface to Health Sciences Centre is still a period of time away. It is not imminent. It is not happening in the next short period of time. There is still work to do on that whole issue. We had a discussion about some of this in Question Period about Health Sciences Centre and so on. On an overall basis our numbers of procedures for cardiac surgery are up significantly and what I will do is return with both the numbers and the number of surgeries we are doing. We will be doing some comparison in the last couple of years to give the member a sense of the significant growth in that area, but I will also give him the sense of what is happening during this summer period.

We discussed in Question Period the issue of what is being described at HSC as a summer slowdown which is also being described to me as being an occurrence that takes place every summer because so many of our people in this province, rightfully so, want to take their holidays in the summertime. I was also told that the slowdown at Health Sciences Centre is actually much less than it has been for the last several years.

*(1720)

Just to give the member a sense of what has happened at Health Sciences Centre, cardiac surgery alone went up 50 percent at Health Sciences Centre, from 400 to 600 procedures. As I indicated, I was told there was always a

summer slowdown, but that many cases just also means that there is a shift to our community hospitals. Again, just on that issue, cardiac surgery today, 20 percent of cardiac surgery patients are emergent, and those individuals have their surgery within one to two days. Forty percent of cardiac surgery patients are urgent, and they have their surgery within two weeks. The other 40 percent of cardiac surgery patients that are stabilized have their surgery anywhere within up to a maximum of approximately 12 weeks. So, you know, our waiting times are certainly not excessive and, if I recall correctly, I think when we compare ourselves in this area across Canada, Manitoba stacks up very well.

I will give the member more details on the transition of the program to HSC, the estimated timing of that, and as I say, that is not something that is going to be happening in the short term. I will provide more information overall about cardiac surgery.

Mr. Chomiak: I would look forward to receiving those statistics, particularly the numbers, and I would presume the government would want this information out about the numbers, the increase in the surgery, and the reduction in waiting lists. I know they were less reluctant to have this information out a couple years ago, but none the less I would like to see that information, and I think it would be most useful, as well as the specific point about whether or not there was going to be a reduction in the number of cardiac surgeries, or a proposal for that this year.

Mr. Stefanson: I, too, look forward to providing the member with the comparisons of what we have done over the last few years in terms of cardiac surgery, and I will provide him the best information I can on what is expected to happen during 1999-2000.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the ministry give us the estimates of the operating deficits of the various hospitals in the city of Winnipeg for this year, and projected, if possible, for next year?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I was just getting an update, because we did discuss this briefly I think at the front end of our Estimates or at some point. I did indicate then that our

staff are still in discussions with the Winnipeg Hospital Authority who are still in discussions with the hospitals in terms of some of the final year-end adjustments in clarifying some issues to make sure there is no duplication, no double counting and so on. There still are a couple of other issues to resolve, so that has not happened yet. Those '98-99 deficits have not been finalized, and I did indicate to the member, once they were finalized, then I would undertake to provide that information.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, in 1993 when the bed registry was first announced, we applauded its formation, and we have patiently waited for it. We have applauded every reannouncement of it. I wonder if the minister can outline for me the status of the bed registry system and details as to how it functions, its operation, and how we can obtain information with respect to the bed registry.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, again, I will return with maybe a more detailed update, but a preliminary response in terms of the whole issue of a bed utilization strategy, just to give the member a sense within Winnipeg, the WHA, the regional director for bed utilization is in place, regional bed utilization physician position is established, the physician bed manager is appointed at all sites. As the member is well aware, the purpose of the bed registry is to map the status of bed use on a daily basis in Winnipeg hospitals initially, and currently information regarding bed numbers and occupancy is forwarded daily in manual format from all of the hospitals. Information is then distributed to the hospitals and the various authorities, and the Emergency Department of the Health Sciences Centre acts as a central coordinating body for emergency department statistics that are distributed daily.

Information collected includes patients awaiting medical beds, patients being treated in hallways, daily emergency visits and so on. Of course, a longer-term plan still under consideration is to potentially utilize computerization and to distribute the information on-line which would enhance the timeliness somewhat, but right now the system is being done and functioning quite well manually. I know, certainly from my meetings over the last

few months, many of the facilities were quite complimentary of the bed management, the bed co-ordination during the peak of Winnipeg's and Manitoba's flu season. That is the status and I could certainly provide the member with more detail.

* (1730)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I do not believe I asked specifically for this, but I am wondering if we can get a breakdown of the operation time for the MRIs that are present and that is when they are operating open to the general public, the number of proposed MRIs per year per machine just for our own understanding.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I know the member for Kildonan was at St. Boniface Hospital Research Centre when we announced recently additional support for the operations of our MRIs and the reduction thereby of our waiting lists.

So I can certainly provide him with the status of our MRI equipment and the hours of operation I think as he knows, I believe two of our units are used for a combination of clinical and research which has an impact on hours of operation, but I can give him a status report on the numbers of units and the hours of operation and show him again the significant increase in the number of services that are being provided.

Mr. Chomiak: I know I had asked the minister about psychogeriatric beds previously and the minister indicated that he would provide those statistics. The plan was to have a series of psychogeriatric teams in place as well. Can the minister update us as to if those teams are in fact in place and where they are located?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I am told that there used to be one geriatric consultation management team, and funding is provided to expand that by two additional teams, so that there are now three geriatric consultation management teams.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I thought the plan was to have five psychogeriatric teams. Am I incorrect in my assumption?

Mr. Stefanson: The member is correct. I am told the plan is to go to five. Two more were added this year, and the view is to add two more as early as, hopefully, next year at the latest.

Mr. Chomiak: There was also a plan to convert six swing beds at St. Boniface Hospital for mental health purposes to permanent status. Has that occurred? What is the status with that particular project?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I am told that those six swing beds at St. Boniface are being converted to permanent.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, can we also get statistics on the number of beds that are earmarked for palliative care beds in the health care system both this year and possibly next year?

Mr. Stefanson: Again, I think we touched on this before. As the member knows, to various degrees many hospitals provide some aspects of palliative care. We have the two official units here in Winnipeg at St. Boniface and Riverview. I can certainly provide information on those and anything else I can provide about any other facilities. Again, the member can appreciate in some cases it is probably fairly difficult to get that with each individual throughout all of Manitoba where some hospitals, I am sure, are providing that sort of service currently.

Mr. Chomiak: Would it be possible to find out statistics in terms of utilization of the emergency rooms? I am particularly interested in the city of Winnipeg as well as the urgent care centre. I know the urgent care centre may be more difficult because of its relatively new status, but could we have statistics in terms of utilization of the emergency rooms as well as the urgent care centre?

Mr. Stefanson: Yes, we can provide that. I am just wondering whether the member wants it on last year's fiscal or what sort of happened over the last few months. But we can certainly provide that information.

Mr. Chomiak: Whatever is easiest for the department to provide. What I am most interested in is the facility-by-facility utilization,

just to get some sense in terms of the transformation and the change.

Mr. Stefanson: We can provide that, Mr. Chairman.

* (1740)

Mr. Chomiak: Again, by way of direction, what I anticipate—

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, just knowing we have a few minutes left, the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) was asking yesterday about St. Boniface. I think the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) was here at the time. Just to clarify that issue of the lab, patients who choose to be tested by their own physician are given the choice of having their results sent back to St. Boniface or not. St. Boniface would prefer to have the test results returned to them to enable them to get a more accurate account of the number of tests and results. However, St. Boniface have indicated that they are informing people that they have the choice. So it really was like we discussed yesterday, that individuals can go to their family physician. It is their choice if they want that information forwarded to St. Boniface. St. Boniface would like it, but it is not compulsory.

Mr. Chomiak: As the minister indicated, we only have a couple of minutes. I anticipate that on Monday I will have general questions, as I have done the last half hour, 40 minutes. Unfortunately, I have not seen all of the information that has been tabled. That is through my own fault. I have not seen all the information that has been tabled. I will review that. I anticipate physicians and remuneration-type questions, and then probably we will move right on to capital throughout the bulk of the Estimates, unless other members have extensive questions, or unless something major develops. That is what I anticipate will happen.

Having said that, perhaps we may as well just call it six o'clock.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the House to call it quarter to? [agreed]

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

House Business

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, on House business, I would like to make an addition to the work to be carried on by the Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs, which was called for Monday, June 7, 1999, at 10 a.m. in Room 255. I would like to ensure that they are able to discuss both the March 31, 1997 and 1998, progress reports for The Forks-North Portage Partnership. So I believe there is an addition of one there as well, which will be included in that work.

I would also seek the leave of the House to call it six o'clock, although the Committees of Supply sitting in the two committee rooms should be allowed to continue until actually six o'clock, if there is leave of the House to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau): The one out there is already adjourned at 5:30. The other one is going to go until six.

Is there leave to call it six o'clock? Do I have to go through that whole nine yards? Okay, there is agreement then on what the minister has put on the record? Is there leave to call it six o'clock? [agreed]

Leave has been granted.

The hour being six o'clock, this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until Monday next at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 3 , 1999

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